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THE ITALIAN SCHOOLS
of
PAINTING

BOTTICELLI

Virgin and Child

(*Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum*)

THE ITALIAN SCHOOLS *of* PAINTING

By

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THE ITALIAN SCHOOLS OF PAINTING

I. SIENESE SCHOOL

IN the history of the rise and fall of empires, of religions and of arts, over and over again the analogy of the seasons becomes irresistible. Iron-bound winter, at once protecting, preserving and retarding the seed of the dead year before it ; spring, struggling to the faint sunlight, immature but exquisite ; summer, glorious in fulfilment ; autumn, flamboyant even in decay ; and last of all before the darkness of another winter, the aftermath of shrivelled leaves and frost-pinched flowers, with here and there a tenacious patch of colour, bold even to rankness, and rotting even while it blooms—these are the universal symbols of progress and decline in every age, in each successive world of human effort of hand and heart and brain. The only thing that never dies is the inextinguishable soul.

But there are many souls, and all are not alike. In the rough beginnings of the human world, there was not, perhaps, so much difference between them ; but no age passed that did not leave behind it some trace of its cultivation, after its own choice, of some seed of thought or feeling, till the wild became a garden in which some growths were treasured and some cast out and burnt as weeds. Moreover, even Nature herself is a gardener, and destroys on one side of the hill the plant that she cherishes upon the other ; and still more so, with more precise and individual selection, men make gardens, each after his own fashion and desire, so that in time you may tell a man's breed from his border, as you pass along the road.

There is no need to overwork the metaphor. The buried seed of Rome lay deep in Italian soil, and the starved and frosty growths of perennial Byzantium were all that survived the winter of the Dark Ages, preserving scarcely more than the outline of the garden of Italian art ; and all that Italy could do with them was to clip and train them to the pattern set by long tradition. To let them straggle into individual growth would have destroyed their only seemliness : and so, full of dead wood and fusty undergrowth, they slowly choked themselves to death, although they still retained their form.

It is hard to say exactly where or why the change began, which was

to bring vigour to this almost dead art of repetition. In each place and in each community the causes differed one from another, and religious and political experience and outlook were their determining factor ; and these in their turn were determined by racial predispositions going back in their origin to the remoter past. If Siena showed the first signs of new life, the more invigorating conditions of the Florentine character made for more rapid and more revolutionary growth. The Sienese mind, aristocratic and mystic, yielded only reluctantly to the influences of humanism and realism, and the Sienese painters, perhaps a little ashamed of the warmth of feeling and human sympathy which they found creeping almost unawares into their religious outlook, strove very conscientiously to keep these new impulses confined within the expressional limitations of the old tradition : and while sentiment grew in power till it transformed mysticism from rigid formula into passionate emotion, the painters of Siena failed, through sheer lack of intellectual vigour and technical elasticity, to keep pace with the change. Still, it is not wholly fair to compare Sienese with Florentine painting of the late 13th and early 14th centuries, to the detriment of the former : for although the conservatism of design and feebleness of drawing of the Sienese school are less convincing to modern eyes than the forceful and progressive quality of Florentine art, they are the outcome as much of a difference in aim as of an inferiority in craft. The two are parallel but not competitive conceptions of the function of painting. We need only find fault with the painters of Siena when they failed to attain their own object ; the goal towards which others might strive was no concern of theirs, nor can we quarrel with them for not adopting means to another's end. Nevertheless, that we must impute to them failure in the task they set themselves becomes apparent early in our study of their work : and this failure was in a great degree due to the temperament which dictated their choice of an aim. Because the aspects of secular and religious life which appealed to them were the emotional and mystical rather than the intellectual and realistic aspects, they clung tenaciously to the old symbolic character of art that they found ready to their hand in the Byzantine tradition. Technical conservatism consorted ill with spiritual adventure, and the result was an incongruous alliance of death and life. It was not so much that they tried to put new wine into old bottles as that to the end they

never realised how old the bottles were, nor how much good wine was trickling away through the rent and rotting skin. The heady wine of the Lorenzetti might have had a chance to mature to a vintage of incomparable quality, had it but been contained in the strong envelope of Florentine perseverance and stored in the cool atmosphere of Florentine intellectualism. Instead, much of it ran to waste in weakness and confusion, and still more became insipid through the dilution of its spirit by excess of trivial emotion.

But the art of Siena began with glorious promise. In Duccio di Buoninsegna it had a pioneer who indeed performed a miracle, making dry bones live, infusing breath and feeling into ancient formulae, retaining all that was as a familiar writing to his public, while giving it a new intensity of meaning, a new directness of reference to everyday experience. It was not the work of a day, nor of a single flash of inspiration, but the development of a lifetime, as patient and as purposeful as that of Giotto himself. If all his successors had held as true a balance between the purpose and the means, the story of Sienese art must have followed a higher and a longer course.

It was only very gradually that he modified the Byzantine conventions in which he had been bred. When he was already over thirty, about 1280, he was still painting pictures of purely Byzantine character, and using all the deliberately denaturalised symbols for eyes and mouth and hands and drapery that were consecrated by long use. A triptych of the Madonna and Child and Angels, with half-figures of David and six Prophets in the spandrel and SS. Dominic and Catherine of Alexandria in the shutters (London N.G. 566) is an example of this earlier phase, which continued with only slow modification down to the end of the 13th century. Opinions are divided as to the possibility of distinguishing a second phase, intermediate between this Byzantine period and the great final group of paintings in which the Gothic spirit which was now invading Italy has triumphed over conventions and traditions by sheer force of human interest. For our immediate purpose this point is of minor interest, for it is upon a work of Duccio's later years, the great ancona of the Duomo, finished in 1310, that we must base our estimate of his contribution to the history of art.

This tremendous composition is now scattered ; the majority of its

parts are in the Opera del Duomo at Siena, and others are in the London National Gallery, the Berlin Museum, and in private hands. It consisted originally of the Majestas, over the high altar, representing Our Lady enthroned, with the Holy Child upon her knee, the Protectors of Siena kneeling in the folds of her robe, and saints and angels about the throne. On the reverse of this altarpiece were thirty-eight panels of the Passion, among which the " Entry into Jerusalem " and the " Crucifixion " are twice the size of the rest. The group thus stands as a link between the Byzantine tradition of many panels grouped together to form a history, and the later practice of the dominating altarpiece in which the subsidiary panels are reduced to the narrow proportions of the predella.

Every part of the group, from the Majestas itself to the least important panel of the reverse, proclaims the new freedom of expression which Duccio had laboured so long to achieve. Though the large eyes, long nose and downturned lips of Our Lady still acknowledge the sway of the Byzantine canon of religious symbolism, her attitude is asymmetrical, with a bold flow of line sweeping across the panel from the left shoulder to the broad fold of her robe that shelters the kneeling figures of the Protectors of Siena. The Child is robust and naturally modelled, and gracious in pose, and each angel gazes with his own expression of adoration, leaning upon the back of the high gilded and diapered throne : and this same freedom and variety appear in the grouping and expression of the crowded figures of the " Crucifixion," where, as in all the panels of the reverse, there is added an intensity of emotional expression for which there was no scope in the motive of the Majestas. What is most striking, however, is that while the composition remains traditionally arbitrary and decorative, the drawing is realistic, varied and expressive of direct observation to a degree never before attempted in the history of painting. There is careful, almost painful study of anatomy, of drapery, and of character, even of dramatic unity, and all these new elements are compressed and most skilfully confined within the bounds of traditional design. The same may be said, in proper degree, of two of the three panels from this group, now in the London National Gallery [The Annunciation (1139) and the " Christ Healing the Blind " (1140)], and therefore it comes as rather a shock to find in the third of our panels (London N.G. 1130) a portion of the predella of the reverse, representing

the Transfiguration, a reversion to almost unalloyed Byzantinism in the three principal figures, and most of all in that of the Christ, who, apart from the features, is scarcely more than a symbolic pictograph. Only the kneeling figures of the disciples serve to remind us that this is the work of a man who had laboured towards emotional naturalism all his life. The explanation seems to lie in that lack of staying power which was the temperamental bane of Siena, though it is rarely revealed in the work of the first and greatest of the Sienese painters. Here was a great theme crowded into an obscure corner of a large and exhausting work : and when inspiration ran dry, there was always the traditional treatment upon which the painter could rely to see him through his task.

In Duccio such a falling-off was rare, for he was a real student and earnest worker : but in his successors it was an increasing danger from one generation of painters to another. There was only one really new note in his work which was continually developed by his successors, and that was a sensitive feeling for unity of colour—a kind of rule-of-thumb anticipation of the principles of tone. In this, as in all departure from hide-bound use, he led the way ; but Simone Martini carried it further, and the Lorenzetti were the first to realise the possibilities of tone as a means of holding together an otherwise rather slipshod type of composition.

Indeed, in Simone Martini we find the most perfect sympathy between colour and design that was ever reached by any mid-Italian painter with the possible exception of Leonardo da Vinci. However gaily he may bedeck his rather emasculate design with colours, they always resolve themselves into a harmonious though haphazard scheme. Form is to a great extent slurred or ignored. Dramatic cohesion is quite non-existent—there are always, in any work of Martini's, as many minds as there are men, and none with any relation to any of the others. It is astounding to see to what an extent he can destroy the dramatic significance of a scene, and at the same time retain its hold upon our sympathies. In his " Investiture of St. Martin " the only thing that is all of a piece is the colour scheme : no one emotional expression in the faces of all the lively group either supplements or explains any other. Each is separately interesting, lively and convincing, but any one could be taken away without lessening the interest of the rest.

The tradition that Martini painted, at Avignon, the portrait of Laura, the beloved of Petrarch, indicates the remarkable way in which this peculiar temperament of the Sienese caused them to lead the way of one of the most important developments of painting. Indeed, it is hard to understand why Sienese painters did not, in the fulness of time, surpass all others in portraiture, so intimately bound up with individual character and individual emotional appeal are all the principles upon which they based their first departures from the Byzantine formula ; but here again they were cramped by their adherence to the conservative outlook upon their craft which made even Duccio and Martini cling with almost desperate tenacity to the Byzantine foundations of composition, even while they boldly violated all its rules of strictly impersonal symbolism. Ugolino da Siena, who was at work during the first thirty years of the 14th century, was a close follower of his contemporary Duccio, and, like him, combined emotional vigour with sobriety and grace of design ; his conservatism showed itself in the thoughtful development of the possibilities of painting as he found it ; and there is on the other hand a certain robust sincerity which gives animation, not merely to faces or figures but to whole groups, such as the "Betrayal of Christ" (London N.G. 1188). Without any great departure from accepted formulae, he made a real effort to keep pace with the new demands that were laid upon his craft alike by himself and by his public. Duccio and Ugolino had in them more fixity of purpose, and a surer grasp of the principles upon which a progressive craft must be based, than any of their contemporaries in Siena ; and in this respect they approached so nearly to the outlook of the Florentine that it is not at all surprising to find them actually employed in Florence itself ; the former at Sta. Maria Novella, and the latter at Sta. Croce. For this brief moment in the history of Italian painting it seemed almost as though the promise of a union of progress between the two cities, which had been made by their co-operation at Assisi, might be fulfilled : but the next stage in Sienese painting revealed the impossibility of any such alliance ; for at the very moment when in Florence the successors of Giotto were putting themselves with apparent timidity into the leading strings of the Giottesque formula, and seemed to lack either the courage or the ability to carry his work a step further, the Lorenzetti, Pietro and Ambrogio, swept boldly forward along the path of pure emotionalism

with a noble but fatal disregard alike of the older tradition and the newer learning. They cut the bonds whose knots had been so patiently loosened by Duccio and Ugolino ; but the knots remained, and the tangled trammels, only half thrown off, tripped them in their stride. The pace they set was hot, but the track they followed was not clearly marked either for themselves or for those who followed them ; and so it wound inconsequently away from the broadening path towards world domination that was beaten by the slower but more disciplined march of the painters of Florence.

Yet that first forward rush was very wonderful. Unlike their contemporaries, Pietro Lorenzetti (working 1306–1348) and his brother Ambrogio (working c. 1319–1348), were from the first more Gothic than Byzantine in their point of view, and added to the lively strength of Gothic art, as we understand it in the North, a tenderness that is not weakness at all, but rather an added source of power to appeal. The elder brother began, indeed, with the characteristic and traditional Sienese insistence upon minute detail, and jewelled richness of colour and ornament, of which the " Incident in the Life of a Saint " (London N.G. 113) is a brilliant example, and only moved gradually towards the greater breadth and stronger emotional emphasis of which " Our Lady between SS. Francis and John," in the Lower Church at Assisi, is typical. Even more emphatically human, and bolder in execution, is the Madonna in the Uffizi, and it is interesting to compare this with the remnants of his early work which are to be found in the Gallery at Siena, and the example at St. Maria delle Pieve at Arezzo. It is, however, in the work of Ambrogio that we are able to see the full fruit of Pietro's innovating genius ; for the younger man, inspired by his brother and teacher, started on his career without either consciousness of the past, or fear of the future. The breadth of Pietro's later work is the starting point for Ambrogio, and in the fragments of fresco in the London National Gallery we are able to see, perhaps even better than in the grandiose confusion of the frescoes of Good and Bad Government in the Palazzo Communaale at Siena, the extraordinary lengths to which a single painter could take his new-found freedom of technique ; for not only is emotion expressed by these paintings with remarkable variety and fluidity, but the free flow of the brush, and the bold simplification of forms, are positively modern

in their detachment from all preoccupation in regard to the means so long as the end is attained. The work of Ambrogio Lorenzetti makes the same impression upon the mind as the eloquence of an orator who, though unbridled in form, is utterly sincere in content. To criticise his work in the details of its execution is to destroy it, for it is slovenly in drawing and haphazard in design ; but to accept it for the value of its emotional appeal is to overlook all the imperfections of the process for the sake of the overwhelmingly convincing quality of the result. Ambrogio Lorenzetti was a spiritual impressionist with as complete disregard of the minutiae of form and design as had the material impressionists of the sixties in France. He painted emotional atmosphere with as complete an objectivism as that of Monet in regard to material atmosphere.

His was, in fact, the last word in the story of Sienese achievement. Bartolo di Fredi only stiffened his methods, and Sassetta, in the first half of the 15th century, did no more than set a standard of prettiness which gradually deprived Sienese painting of any pretension to reality of feeling or honesty of method. Nothing could be more exasperatingly clever or more completely insincere than the altarpiece of the Osservanza at Siena, which he finished in 1436. He has been described as a master of imaginative design ; but although he had both power of design and fertility of imagination, his art as a whole tends to be obscured by the individual and unrelated charm of its parts. In this, of course, he followed the lead of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, but lacked his sincerity to give unity to his wandering and fickle interest.

Yet there is in all Sassetta's work a touch of exquisite quality, a refinement of the fire of the Lorenzetti, which sets him on a different level from that of the fading prettiness of many of his contemporaries in Siena. The fresco fragment in the London National Gallery (1842) has both nobility and grace, and is thoroughly masculine in its manner of rendering femininity ; and his influence lasted long after him, giving to the painters of Siena who were touched by it a dignity which their own slovenly methods of expression do not deserve. Giovanni di Paolo (1403 ?–1482) affords an example of this rescue from futility of an inferior painter by the influence of one possessing real vigour and individuality. The influence of Sassetta is also to be found in the fine colour and lively composition of Matteo di Giovanni (1434–1495)

who, although a pupil of Domenico di Bartolo, derived little from him. Sentiment, in all his work, is vivid and varied, but always strongly tinged with self-consciousness. The " Assumption " in the London National Gallery (1155) is an exquisite feast of decorative colour and tender feeling, devoid of concentration it is true, in the right Simone Martini tradition, but very engaging for all that ; and his St. Sebastian (London N.G. 1461) shows us a Sienese art fully developed and ripe for contamination from any source from which it might acquire a still prettier and feebler emotionalism. Benvenuto di Giovanni (1436–1518) made some sort of a stand against this surrender of Sienese independence in painting : if we place his naïve and mediaeval " Madonna and Child " (London N.G. 2482) side by side with the " Madonna of the Rocks " of his contemporary Leonardo da Vinci, we shall realise the hopelessness, the tragic humour, of the conflict between the ideals of Siena and Florence at this moment. There was no room in a progressive world for the vague symbolism of the 14th century, beyond which this, the last of the purely Sienese painters, could not go : and Bernardino Fungai (1460–1516) with his Umbrian affinities (*e.g.* London N.G. 1331, " Madonna and Child with Cherubim "), his follower Girolamo del Pacchia (1477–1533) with his sentimental echoes of Raphael and of Sodoma, and Pacchiarotto (1474–1540), for all his truly Sienese vividness of individual characterisation always reminiscent of Perugino, prepare us for the disappearance of a distinctive Sienese school from the history of Italian painting.

Only by reason of such a merging of Sienese art in a mingled stream drawn from many sources can the Lombard Sodoma (1477–1549) be reckoned a Sienese painter at all. Born at Vercelli, strongly influenced, in Milan, by Leonardo, he came in 1501 to Siena, where his neurotic and unstable temper found congenial surroundings in which to develop an art that goes beyond sentimentality to the point of hysteria. His drawing is suave and graceful, and his command of minute decorative detail is masterly ; but his colour is often livid, and in his " Vision of St. Catherine of Siena " in San Domenico at Siena, or in the " Madonna and Child with Saints " (London N.G. 1144), the sentiment is theatrical almost to the point of vulgarity, for it lacks all sincerity except that of a love of emotion for its own sake.

The art of Siena faded out because it was not deeply rooted either in sound craftsmanship or in sturdy sincerity of feeling. Haphazard in method, and flighty in sentiment, unstable as water, Siena could not prevail against the stern combination of clear thinking and purposeful vigour which her neighbour Florence brought to the task of building up an art expressive of her religious and intellectual ideals.

II. THE FLORENTINE SCHOOL

IF Siena proved to all time the propulsive power of sentiment beyond the expressive capacity of technical equipment, on the other hand Florence exemplifies the creative power of knowledge, even when untouched by feeling. We have seen how, from Duccio to Sodoma, the Sienese artist sought always the short cut to emotional expression. From Cimabue to the latest and most depraved of Florentine technicians, the Tuscan aim was perfection in the means, even beyond the requirements of the end, of art. This may seem a hard saying; but if we consider, without passion or bias, the work of the first great progressive among Florentine painters, Giotto, we are bound to admit at the outset that his main pre-occupation is not so much beauty as efficiency. In essence there is little or no difference between these two abstracts, but it is the angle of approach that matters, in the study of the psychology of the school as a whole: and, while there is little to choose between Duccio and Cimabue, for the simple reason that both are so absolutely on the threshold of their art as to be able to give little indication either of their source of impulse or their trend of progress, the moment that we come to the work of Giotto, with his very definite statement of his aim, we can see quite plainly the evidences of that scientific attitude towards painting both in method and function, of which Leonardo da Vinci was the final and culminating phenomenon.

Florentine art is in fact for the most part a cool-headed business. Grant to Giotto, as fully as you please, all credit for a tremendous instinct for a dramatic situation; his art is none the less (like much of the greatest dramatic literature in the world) essentially machine-made. In his new and wonderfully exhaustive study of the human face, it is the mechanism of emotional expression, rather than emotion itself, that he studies; in his unrivalled dramatic composition, as shown in the scenes of the life of St. Francis, at Assisi, he is rather a born "producer" than a sympathetic witness of an appealing scene. His bold ribaldry of speech about sacred things, which is traditional, might seem to consort ill with his exquisitely tender realisation of the simplicity of St. Francis, when he preaches to the birds, or confronts the Vicar of Christ in the

seat of St. Peter, were it not that we are able to bear in mind his equal interest in both as subjects for purely dramatic presentation by means of an art that had never before in its mediaeval history attempted drama.

For such an art and such a coldly scientific aim, no slipshod sentimental craft would serve. Giotto, by imposing upon painting a task of such magnitude, imposed upon it progress also, progress in the merest mechanism of the craft. The lay figures of the Byzantine tradition, the pretty generalisations of character-types and emotional conventions evolved, quite sufficiently to their purpose, by the Sienese artists, were utterly inadequate to his purpose, and to the demands of the Florentine public mind to which he addressed himself and his art. Technical progress was imposed upon Giotto, and upon all Florentine painters, both by individual and collective temperament.

The most astounding thing, however, is that this new objective, of dramatic conciseness, in no way shook the devotion of Giotto to the age-long decorative tradition of painting. The Lower Church at Assisi shows Giotto, not in the least cramped by the necessity of filling awkwardly-shaped spaces with harmonious and balanced decoration, but rather basing his whole treatment of a subject upon the limitations of this primary necessity. Giotto was no rebel ; he did not seek an unearned and insecure independence for painting, but was quite content to make even his virile and self-sufficient art serve its ancient purpose, not the worse but actually the better for its more vigorous and individually interesting emotional content. Even when, as in the " Death of the Knight of Celano " or the " Noli me Tangere," he plays the most astonishing tricks with the decorative uses of space, he still remembers to be a decorator of a pre-determined shape of wall, and derives his greatest strength from the perfection of accord between the two objects—the decorative and the dramatic : and one of the strangest phenomena of the development of Florentine art is the extent to which his pupils and successors were content to abandon the example of dramatic expression which he had set them, and to spend the better part of half a century in marking time till their technical powers of representation should draw level with the intensified and enhanced decorative power with which the great pioneer had endowed them.

This interval in effort is the more remarkable in that the progress made by Giotto himself was not in his lifetime by any means an isolated phenomenon. Apart from the initial burst of energy in Siena represented by Duccio and his contemporaries, Rome also had its pioneer in Pietro Cavallini, whose frescoes in Sta. Cecilia Trastevere will more than bear comparison with the work of his younger contemporary, Giotto. These frescoes demonstrate, however, that although Cavallini probably assisted Giotto at Assisi, he was not very greatly influenced by him, and that his work is inspired by, and developed from the true Roman tradition, which has more affinity with Roman antiquity even than with the Byzantine type which had mastered all other forms in the rest of Italy. There is magnificent power of design in these frescoes, and although Cavallini was primarily a mosaist and probably a follower of the Cosmati, as a painter he makes the best use of the vigour of line and definition of drawing which were the natural outcome of the art of the technical process of mosaic. But manifestly, such an art as that of Cavallini could not be the starting point of a continuous development, for it had no roots in the craft of painting itself, but was rather a survival in the hands of an artist of unusual power than the beginning of a new phase of progress.

For Giotto had no real successor till Masaccio—that is, if we are willing to admit that only a genius can add to the achievement of a genius. Of all those who came between, filling the 14th century with the record of painful and uninspired endeavour, Orcagna (1308–1368) stands out by reason of a certain virility which informs both his arrangement of colour pattern and his delineation of character : and in the careless drawing and vigorous dramatic sense of Spinello Aretino (1333–1410), we see another form of selective imitation of Giotto, which suggests that each of his successors felt impelled not so much to make an advance upon his achievement, as to imitate such aspects of it as were suited to their own particular circumstances of temperament and environment. Thus, Orcagna had no power of dramatic design, though he had a great range of delineation of character, and a strong decorative sense ; Taddeo Gaddi was a beautiful draughtsman in his generation, but was deficient in almost every quality of Giotto : Spinello had little sense of form, and less of structural drawing, but strong dramatic feeling, and it is not till we come

to the work of Masolino, the pupil of Orcagna, that we are able to feel that the thread of progress has been picked up again in all its strands. His work at Empoli is full of fire, adventurous in drawing, and sanely balanced as decorative design.

It has happened with strange frequency in the history of painting that a short-lived genius at the turn of a century has set up a new objective and opened up a new world of endeavour ; and though at the moment of transition from the 14th to the 15th century, Masaccio (1402–1428) was not entirely alone in his meteoric course from the decorative to the plastic world of painting, he was not only alone, but without any very immediate successor in his realisation of tridimensional space as an element in composition. In years, he scarcely progressed beyond adolescence, and the fire and force of youth are in his work throughout ; but their miracle consists, not in this power to express a quality of vision hitherto unknown, so much as in the sanity and restraint by which the new vision is controlled and subjected to old and, for him, outworn decorative laws.

The last years of mediæval and romantic thought and feeling in Italy made tremendous demands upon the realism of her artists. Romance is not in itself an æsthetic so much as a dramatic emotion, and in its less sophisticated stages, requires vigour of outline rather than truth of detail for its expression. The summary conciseness of Giotto had sufficed to tell a story, to state a situation on bold and simple lines : but it could not express the more delicate shades of feeling, nor give their value, subsidiary but contributory, to characters of the second plane both in importance and in actual position. That is one reason for the great advance in emotional and descriptive force in the sister art of sculpture during the 14th century, culminating in the superb achievements of Donatello in the rendering of character and emotional atmosphere ; and that the painters realised their own disadvantages is plainly shown by the increasing degree in which they admitted the influence of sculpture into their work, and even imitated its limitations in order to take its strength in exchange. For a moment, in the first few years of the 15th century, sculpture was actually more " picturesque " than painting ; and Andrea del Castagno (1390–1457), who, if his own art, as he found it, could have offered him the means for the expression of his fiery and

forceful character, must surely have used them, not only betrays his debt to sculpture in general and Donatello in particular in such works as his portrait of Dante, but actually avows it in his " monument " to Nicolo da Tolentino, painted in monochrome upon the walls of the Duomo at Florence : and no less than he, Paolo Uccello (1397–1495) was inspired by sculpture to his lifelong struggle with the principles of perspective, and, like him, imitated the very appearance of sculpture by painting the semblance of a statue : his essay in this remarkable genre was the " statue " of Hawkwood, the English condottiere, in St. Maria del Fiore at Florence. The same straining after sculptural effect is to be seen in all his work in the cloisters of St. Maria Novella, and in the Campo Santo at Pisa. Yet, when he came to apply his hardly-won knowledge of perspective and foreshortening to purely pictorial art, we find how far he fell short of realising the implications that it carried with it in the matter of composition. The " Rout of San Romano " in the London National Gallery is magnificently decorative, and laboriously elaborate as an exercise in perspective drawing and in the details of foreshortening ; but it displays no vestige either of plasticity of form or depth of field, and remains a decorative surface in two dimensions : indeed, Uccello, for all his superiority in scientific research, never attained so nearly to the rendering of solid form in space as did Andrea del Castagno with his ferocity of attack and haphazard but inspired vision.

Neither of them, although older contemporaries of Masaccio, grasped the significance of his achievement, or was greatly influenced by it. The new territory that he added to the domain of painting was not one that could be captured by force or wooed by cool-headed perseverance ; the beaten track of painting did not lead to its borders, and the path of the sculptor, though it seemed to point in a promising direction, was a false trail for the painter to follow. What was needed to discover the entry to this promised land was vision, and this was a quality which neither Uccello nor Andrea possessed, while it belonged to Masaccio in a superlative degree, and enabled him to see not only the figures of his drama, but also the living scene and space in which they moved, not merely as a decorative accessory, but as an integral part of them and of their interaction.

In short, while Giotto had seen life steadily, and analysed its mechan-

ism, and balanced its human action, so as to bring it within the scope of decorative design, Masaccio was the first to see it whole ; and the most immediate and obvious result was the startling advance towards anatomical accuracy shown by his rendering of the individual human figure. Yet this was a secondary development. The primary aim of his work was to incorporate into his design as a whole the third dimension of space, and to give both decorative and dramatic value to the depth of his field of vision. The mere fact that such a great advance towards realism revealed the inadequacy both of lay figures and of statues as actors in such a setting, forced him to the study of the human figure not only from the plastic point of view but also from that of the expression of movement, and we have only to look at his " Expulsion from Eden " to realise with what a swift stride he has left all his predecessors and contemporaries behind in this respect.

In another matter, far more obscure and difficult for a Florentine, he was equally driven forward by his primary aim, namely the graduation of colour, and the perception of atmospheric tone. It would be far too much to claim for Masaccio that he ever rendered atmosphere, or even realised it as a possible component in a composition. The most we can say is that he was vaguely conscious of its existence, and saw it as an influence which helped him in rendering the relative distance of various objects from his first plane : in other words, he was the first Florentine to grasp the fact that colours are not absolute in nature, but recede from purity as they recede from the eye ; and this fact he used, for example, in the " Adoration of the Magi " at Berlin, and in the " Tribute Money " in the Carmine at Florence, to emphasise the depth of field by putting points of brilliant colour in his middle distance, while he still reduced them to secondary importance by making quieter notes in the foreground dominate them by a more forcible rendering of plasticity and a greater purity of colour. Thus the eye is tempted into the heart of the picture, while remaining conscious of the foreground figures which it has to pass to reach the second plane, and does not content itself by passing over the painted surface of the panel.

Laborious as this analysis of Masaccio's aims may seem, it is necessary if we are to grasp the enormous importance of the change which it eventually brought in its train ; for such a purpose in the painter shakes

to its very foundations the decorative tradition of painting. It makes the space to be painted of less importance than the painting, for it creates space where space was not before, and that too a space which is actually destructive of the verticality, the constructional essence and function of the wall. It brings the "picture" pure and simple into being.

If Masaccio had lived longer, it is possible that the revolution in the function of painting which he foreshadowed would have been more rapid and more universal than it actually was: but even so, it is not likely that the decorative tradition would have yielded up its sway without a struggle. As it was, it survived to the end, and mercifully so; for if the austere restraint of decorative symbolism had been wholly absent from the work of the giants of the Renaissance, into what orgies of passionate realism might not Michelangelo have been betrayed, what tortuous paths of cynical experiment might not Leonardo da Vinci have followed, what cruelties of comment upon human frailty might he not have perpetrated. So the decorative function of painting survived to exercise control over the new-found power to reflect the living world, and to endow its possessors with the faculty of selection in its exercise.

Naturally, however, there was for a time some divergence of aim among the Florentine painters, who pursued each the old or the new road as their individual temperament or environment dictated, and the convergence of the two roads did not take place until each had reached and passed the summit of its achievement. Nor can it be denied that the path followed by the realists reached the greater heights, and that the line which led through Fra Angelico, Filippo and Filippino Lippi, Cosimo Roselli and his pupil Piero di Cosimo, to Botticelli, never was comparable in its influence upon the ultimate trend of the art with that of the Pollaiuoli, Ghirlandajo and Michelangelo on the one hand or of Baldovinetti, Verrocchio, and Leonardo da Vinci on the other. While the "idealists" remained purely and even archaistically Florentine, the realists became, by the end of the 15th century, universal, the very rock upon which Western painting, in Italy itself, in Spain and in Central and Western Europe was built. It was the realists, not the idealists, who were ready to grasp the inheritance of old Rome and older Greece, when the Renaissance brought it back to Italy. The painters of the older tradi-

tion, and the compromising eclectics of Umbria, played with classicism in a dainty and romantic fashion ; but the more virile adventurers of the new art grasped it and made it their own. While the idealists resurrected Rome, but never dared to strip her of her winding-sheet of antiquity, the realists brought her to re-birth and life renewed, not as a memory re-born out of time, but as the very incarnation of new Italy.

Indeed, Italy itself was re-born with the Renaissance ; for with its coming there came back again the old provincial characteristics of the Cisalpine domains of Rome. Each in its own way created its own image of its ancient glory, and Tuscany for the first time found serious rivals for the supremacy in artistic progress and vitality. Perugia and Padua, even backward and Byzantine Venice, found their own means to their own ends, drawing their resources from the common heritage. To these we shall turn presently ; but in the meantime it will be well to remember that there is no longer only the single stream of Florentine progress to reckon with, but that the springs are breaking everywhere, and that their rivers are not all flowing to the same sea, although the primary source of all their waters is one.

In the art of Fra Angelico we find the true and unfaltering continuance of the older Florentine tradition, softened, though not weakened by the influence of Siena through his Sienese-born master Lorenzo il Monaco. In his way he was as dramatic in his handling of his subjects as Giotto, whose method he followed in the main, though adding to it a greater gaiety of colour, and, of course, a greater freedom in the handling of the problems of draughtsmanship which the pioneer of Florentine painting had solved with striving long ago : but he never went so far even as Giotto in realistic vigour or in variety of expression, and the retiring and simple quality of his own character gives an air almost of timidity to all but his greatest conceptions. His " Last Judgment," however, is superb in the confident handling of its composition, which is symmetrically balanced not only in form but in sentiment, and reveals a boldness of design which he could not have been guessed to possess if we had only his " Annunciation " at Sammarco by which to value him : here and there, too, he shows a dramatic instinct as powerful as, and far less impersonally detached than that of Giotto. His " Agony in the Garden " is a case in point ; in subtle psychological insight it is a handling of the

theme worthy of Giotto at one end of the story and of Leonardo da Vinci at the other ; for the introduction into the design, as an almost contemptuous comment upon the sleep of the disciples who could not watch with Him one hour, of the Mother of God, apart and lonely in her grief as He in His, and yet one with Him in His agony, is a master-stroke of drama surprising in so gentle and so conservative a painter.

Fra Filippo Lippi was, so tradition will have it, a worldling turned by fate and fashion to the task of sacred painting : and indeed in all his work is a lively power of observation, careless yet telling, which brings a new freshness into his rendering of all his themes, however much he may adhere to old tradition : moreover, he seems to have been more deeply influenced by Masaccio than most of his contemporaries, even those whose bent took them in the direction of vigorous realism ; and the plasticity of his rather slipshod modelling of form, and the way in which he contrives to control his colour, giving it a unity beyond that of mere superficial pattern, seem to indicate that he was conscious, like Masaccio, of the possibility of composing, as well as of drawing, in three dimensions of space. A purely orthodox work, such as his " Annunciation " in the London National Gallery (66), looks at the first glance like a mere transcript of a work of Fra Angelico : but a little attention soon reveals a greater intimacy between the figures and the setting, a more airy space around them ; and another London National Gallery work, "St. John the Baptist with SS. Cosmas and Damian and other Saints" (667), almost abandons decoration for realism, with its free and varied drawing of drapery, its beautiful handling of difficult and subtle tones of colour, and its suggestion of open air.

Although Italy was now on the very brink of that flood of classical inspiration which is called the Renaissance, it is remarkable that many of her artists were almost entirely impervious to its rising influences, and even in so far as they were touched by it, its only visible reaction upon their work was that of means rather than end. Two artists, Pesellino (1422–1457) and Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1498), afford a good example of this resistance to the new spirit ; for the former, though in greater freedom of draughtsmanship and a surer command of spatial design he yields to the influence of Masaccio, remains wholly mediæval in sentiment and in the main essentials of his simple composition, for the whole

of his short life ; while the latter was scarcely more than an imitator of Fra Angelico, whose pupil he was, till the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had forced him, in common with all Italy, to take cognizance of new sources of inspiration. Even then, as his magnificently decorative and narrative " Journey of the Three Kings to Bethlehem " on the walls of the Riccardi Chapel in Florence, painted in 1457–59, amply demonstrates, he could not go so far as Masaccio in the realisation of depth of field, but could only pile up his composition rather after the manner of Uccello, though without his force of modelling. The new element in his work, however, was that of an intensified interest in individual character and picturesque detail of subsidiary action, and this quality, which is Gozzoli's personal reaction to the new humanism, entitles him to a place in the advance guard of the Renaissance, rather than in the rearguard of the Middle Ages. Nothing could be gayer than the pageantry of this great work, as the long procession winds through the fantastic landscape ; and since dramatic action was no part of the theme, the dramatic instinct of the painter is satisfied by the management of his design in such a way as to bring into monumental prominence the mounted figures of the Kings, of whom the youngest, a figure in white and gold upon a great white horse, is an unforgettable symbol of the majesty of youth.

In all these painters, however, the scales are weighted towards the past. Not one of them can keep an even balance between the old faith and the new knowledge : and indeed this feat might have been decreed by us impossible of achievement, had it not been performed in supreme fashion by Alessandro Filipepi (1466–1510), whom all the world knows as Botticelli. Though he was in his youth a close follower, and perhaps a pupil of Filippo Lippi, we shall constantly find ourselves carried backward to Masaccio, and forward to Leonardo da Vinci, in the contemplation of his work. In a sense he is the central figure of the Renaissance, at once inspired by its wealth of new ideas, and disheartened by its incompatibility with the older world to which his soul still clung, though his intellect turned from it.

His earlier work is strongly reminiscent in the grouping of forms and in general design, of Filippo Lippi. The figures are close-set almost in the fashion of a patchwork decoration, and as in the " Adoration of the Magi " in the London National Gallery, he makes frequent use of architec-

tural filling to mask the distance which he loved to paint, but which he was as yet afraid to use as part of his main design : but the hold of the Renaissance is strong upon his mind, and betrays itself in the rich design of the fall of drapery, and in the elaboration of architectural detail. When, in the tondi, such as the "Madonna of the Magnificat" (Uffizi) and the "Madonna of the Pomegranate" (Louvre), he has a confined space within which to work, all his inherited decorative instinct comes out with compelling force, and is enhanced to the point of almost miraculous ease and certainty by his command of line, derived from the patient study of classical examples : and at the same time, all this skill, which makes every line of the design, every fold of drapery, ancillary to the unbroken perfection of the enclosing circle, is itself but the servant of an exquisitely human and sympathetic sentiment inspired by the subject itself. The temperament of Botticelli was one which needed faith for its support, and yet tended always in the direction of doubt. One is tempted to believe that he loved Our Lady the more as his faith grew less, for a poignant note of pity for her sorrow overcasts all his reverence for her divine motherhood.

It is when we turn to his portraiture that we find a kind of starkness, an element of uncompromising truth, in all his work ; and though his outlook on his fellow-men was melancholy, it was also clear. Moreover, in portraiture, he was able to afford play, without misgivings of any kind, to his purely artistic instinct for dramatic emphasis of contrasted planes. The portrait of Piero Lorenzo de' Medici (Uffizi), for example, is a vigorous study of character, with bold modelling and strong colour-tone, set forward with startling force by the delicately graduated tones of the distant background ; and its statuesque stillness—a constant characteristic of all Botticelli's portraits—robs it not at all of vitality, but is merely the painter's method of asserting the paramount importance of design in painting.

In his purely mythological subjects, however, Botticelli is supremely free. The air of gentle melancholy which pervades them is not the melancholy of a mind tortured by doubts, or cramped by the limitations of a subject. It is merely that of a mind luxuriating in unreality, as who should live in dreams of fairyland, gently haunted by the fear of a rough awakening, yet rejoicing to fix the dream in unalterable and unforgettable

shape, before it fades. It was this attitude of Botticelli's towards these subjects which made it possible for him to fill them with the suggestion of arrested motion, trembling in its immobility upon the verge of dissolution into new movement. They live only in their perfection of design. " Pallas and the Centaur," " Mars and Venus," the " Birth of Venus," and above and beyond all, the perfect, the incomparable " Primavera," come to our memory, complete and fixed for ever, as defiant of change as Leonardo's " Last Supper."

Botticelli is in yet another aspect the very pivot of the art of the Renaissance : for this perfection of design is built up of an equal perfection of line and modelling, of texture and colouring. To appreciate to the full the fact that as a draughtsman Botticelli is full of latent strength, and that his rendering of anatomical form is as powerful as that of a great sculptor, it is necessary to go past the design to the detail, and to study the head and throat of the sleeping Mars, the trailing foot and winding drapery of one of the Graces in the " Primavera," the figure of Truth in the " Calumny." It is here that we catch a glimpse of the fire of a Masaccio, the vehemence of character which made Botticelli burn his drawings and forswear painting at the bidding of Savonarola, and after long inaction, through all the sorrowful days of his beloved Florence, break out in that last passionate avowal of faith regained, of vision beyond mortal sight, the " Nativity " of the London National Gallery (1034). In this last work there is a return, especially in the treatment of the surrounding scene, almost to the simplicity of the days when Lippi was his model. In the figures there is a sacrifice even of some of his precious draughtsmanship ; and in place of doubt, and melancholy, and stillness, there is a whirl of movement, an ecstasy of joy, a confidence of faith, that place this picture among the world's few great monuments of utter and blissful sincerity.

It has been too much the fashion to regard Botticelli as primarily a master of linear design ; the fact is that, although he deliberately repressed his sense of plastic form, in order to bring it within the scope of the decorative intention of his work, that sense was actually developed to a higher degree of sensitiveness and subtlety than in almost all of his contemporaries ; and the way to realise this is to place his work side by side with that of his close associates and pupils. Of the former, a pupil

of Cosimo Roselli, Piero di Cosimo, seems at first sight to present to us a bolder roundness and a more realistic impression of aerial space ; but in fact, though Piero's modelling is rounder and softer, and his observation of nature perhaps more spontaneous, less academic, than that of Botticelli, he loses in delicacy of vision what he gains in romantic appeal, and is in fact a painter of far less solid quality, both in craft and in inspiration. We have only to place his " Death of Procris " (London National Gallery, 698) side by side with Botticelli's " Mars and Venus " to grasp the difference between the two, and the superiority of the latter not only in design but in modelling as well : Piero di Cosimo undoubtedly holds his own in the matter of control of colour ; and in this, Botticelli, save in his very latest work, the Nativity, does certainly seem to have lacked imagination and subtlety. The work of his pupil Sellaio too, betrays the fact that those in closest contact with him could learn little from him save the linear design for which he has been most esteemed ; and in the hands of an inferior imitator, this quality loses grace and lightness, and degenerates into stringy over-emphasis of line, which flat and chalky colour does nothing to soften or redeem. Botticelli had in fact taken the art of the idealist school as far as it could be taken, and it was his delicacy of feeling combined with command of form and space, and a dramatic vigour equal to that of any of his contemporaries who had elected to follow the path of plastic realism, that had kept embodied so long the fading spirit of the Middle Ages.

The progress of the realists was in fact the exact converse of that of Botticelli. For while he strove to compress within the ancient decorative formulæ of painting the new realities of form and space, they struggled unceasingly to break away from those formulæ, and were constantly hampered by the lack of those very qualities in which Botticelli excelled. Following upon Andrea del Castagno, with his coarse power as of rough-hewn sculpture, and Uccello, with his scholarly but unconvincing experiments in foreshortening and perspective, the two Pollaiuoli, Antonio (1432–1498) and Piero (1443–1496), pupils of Andrea, laboured earnestly to achieve a really plastic rendering of the human form, and emphasised with all the ingenuity in their power the resolution of the area of their pictures into a near and distant plane, as though they feared, on the one hand to abandon the decorative tradition which gave primary

importance to the flat surface, and on the other, to sacrifice force of representation to unity of design. It was as though they tried to superimpose Andrea del Castagno on Paolo Uccello. The result was interesting, if unconvincing. A forcible example is the " Saint Sebastian " in the London National Gallery (292). The drawing and modelling of the figures in the foreground are superb, and show a passion for the problems of foreshortening like that of Uccello, allied to a sculptural feeling derived directly from their own master Andrea, and through him from Donatello : but the clumsy and childish device by which the distant landscape is hung like a back-cloth behind the splendid pyramidal composition of the figures, with its emphatic assertion of depth of field, betrays an infirmity of purpose which can only have arisen in painters so avowedly attached to the cause of plastic realism, from sheer incapability of grasping the fact that aerial space must be incorporated in a design of which the predominant elements are solid and plastically rendered forms, if it is to combine decorative with realistic effect.

In short, the Pollaiuoli never took the step which leads from design to composition, which, in painting, is after all, nothing but design in three dimensions brought within the limitations of a plane surface. In other words, they never grasped the essentials of Masaccio's advance, though that advance was made three-quarters of a century before they ended their work. It was left to Domenico Ghirlandajo (1449–1494), working side by side with them, but influencing them not at all, to carry on the work of Masaccio to its triumphant conclusion.

In this matter of decorative spatial composition Ghirlandajo was, at the end of his career, by far the greatest of the masters of the 15th century, and his art boldly attacked problems which were avoided—I will not say " shirked "—even by his stupendous pupil Michelangelo, and ignored by Leonardo da Vinci. There is probably no more perfect example in all Italian art than the " Adoration of the Shepherds " in the Accademia at Florence, of the linking of foreground and distance, of human, architectural, and landscape forms in a single decorative design, by means of the shapes and proportions of their intervening spaces. He had many faults to overcome, and made more than one false start. The harsh and heavy outlines of his earlier figures, and a certain coarseness of colour which preceded and led to his command of the stronger tones,

had to be eliminated, and he had to resist a tendency also towards a rather puppet-like disposition of his figures, which might have destroyed by overstatement the dramatic significance of his subject : but in the " Burial of Sta. Fina," for all its almost mediæval simplicity, which brings back to our minds the Giottesque note of " produced " drama, there is a wonderful unity of design, in which line and space play their perfectly balanced parts. For it is not only the architectural setting, but also the empty spaces that it encloses, which produce upon the eye the impression of compactness, of controlled and directed action, from which the picture derives the force alike of its decorative and its sentimental appeal.

It is difficult to compare with him the sculptor Verrocchio, of whose work as a painter we know so little that we can ascribe to him with absolute certainty only the " Baptism in Jordan " in the Accademia at Florence : but alike in this picture, and in the National Gallery picture ascribed to him, the " Madonna and Child with Angels" (296), we are bound to be impressed by the balance of the forms and the delicacy and strength of their modelling rather than by the decorative unity of the design as a whole. As a colourist, Verrocchio leaned rather towards an enriched and softened version of the decorative tradition, and emphasised arrangement and pattern of separate masses of colour rather than harmonious gradation of tones. It was in this aspect that he was followed and misinterpreted to the point of mere prettiness, by Lorenzo di Credi ; but the fault of the pupil cannot be imputed to the master, for in him firmness of design is never obscured or outweighed by facile decoration. Whatever may have been the limitations of Verrocchio as a painter, he never failed in dignity : but, perhaps because sculpture was his more natural means of expression, he never attained quite to the incorporation in his design of the background, which tended to remain a single separate plane.

Again and again in our study of the fifteenth-century Florentines we are forced back to Masaccio as the real source of their progress, the manifest link between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance : for while the idealists, from Fra Angelico to Botticelli, the realists, from Andrea del Castagno to Verrocchio, and the academics, if we may call them so, from Uccello to the Pollaiuoli and Verrocchio, all arrive at a standstill, having exhausted the possibilities of each of these lines of progress, it is only

where the principles first enunciated by Masaccio are re-affirmed, that progress becomes possible once more, as in the hands of Ghirlandajo, and of Leonardo da Vinci. Whether or no it was from his master Baldovinetti (1427–1499) and through him from Uccello, that Ghirlandajo learned his command of linear perspective, which plays so large a part in the construction of the " Vision of Sta. Fina," it was from the direct study of the work of Masaccio that he derived the power to apply it to the rendering of aerial space as an integral part of design ; and we cannot but suppose that the glimpses of this use of space which appear in the work of Domenico Veneziano, in spite of its usually emphatic statement of a single dominating plane, were derived also from Masaccio : and Leonardo da Vinci, the pupil of Verrocchio, while he adhered at first with the utmost conservatism to the style of his master, soon informed that style with a new vigour, which transformed it from a static to a dynamic art : and the source of this vigour was neither more nor less than a re-statement of the principles of Masaccio, applied with an understanding of the aim and a mastery of the means far beyond that of their first discoverer.

It is very difficult to pin down to exact examples Leonardo's use of these principles. His attitude to all the arts of which he was a master was so purely scientific, and his practice of them so entirely devoid of emotional impulse, that it is not possible for us to judge his work by the standards applicable to the general run of artists, nor to include him in this or that category or group. Each of his known works had a different objective, and represents a different experiment or series of experiments. Some of these are purely technical, others can only be interpreted as experiments in psychology, in which the effect upon the spectator rather than the expression of the artist is the object ; and in most of his works there are two or even more lines of investigation, which are only brought together in a single work for the artist's convenience, and not because of any essential connection between them.

In the " Mona Lisa " and the two versions of the " Madonna of the Rocks " Leonardo tries out an experiment in tonal scales of colour in which black plays the part of the dominant ; in the former blue is given a sub-dominant function, and in the latter, gold plays the subsidiary part. Comparison of the Louvre version of the " Madonna of the Rocks "

with that in the London National Gallery will establish that not only are both works from the same hand, but that their many differences are of importance in the development of this particular colour-theme. Yet this is only one aspect of the painter's technical interest in his work ; for he is also testing the possibility of giving the greatest depth of recession to the highest light in a composition, and has arrived at a completely successful solution *ad hoc* of the problem, and in the " Mona Lisa," has established its universal application.

In the " Madonna of the Rocks " and the unfinished, and long since destroyed " Battle of Anghiari " he has based all his rendering of human forms on a sculptural tradition in which, naturally, the influence of Verrocchio is more easily traced than in the " Mona Lisa," in which solidity of form is almost obscured by tonal values, and by the indefinition of a shifting and uncertain light. This is no mere sentimental device, for sentiment had no part in Leonardo's character. It is a deliberately chosen condition of the experiment, on the borderland of impossibility, in the rendering by means of an immobile art, of the mobility of the human features. By the multiplication of indefinite shadows round the corners of the mouth he has suggested rather than portrayed the indefinable flicker of a smile.

In the " Last Supper " he reverts to a simplicity of means comparable to that of Ghirlandajo's " Vision of Sta. Fina " for the setting of one of the greatest experiments in psychological effect upon the spectator that have ever been attempted. No subtlety of design, no startling effect of decorative space, is allowed to interfere with the essential aim, which is, to convey to all who see the work an immediate and intimate participation in the drama of the scene. The rigid isolation of the figure of the Christ is emphasised by the simple pyramidal outline of His form as He sits alone, with outstretched hands. His stillness is in dramatic contrast with the agitated masses of the figures of the disciples, heaped together by the conflicting waves of horror and of incredulity, as they recoil from the words, " One of you shall betray me," and almost in the same instant return with the agonised question, " Is it I ? " The long level line of the table, with its trivial details of broken food and the shadowed folds of its cloth, serves as a foil for this poignant drama, emphasising its suddenness, the shock of it, and the mental and spiritual

clamour that it has evoked in eleven of the twelve, the hideous realisation of the immensity of guilt in one.

The success of the experiment rests upon the detachment of its creator. So dispassionate an analysis of the external elements of a drama could only be made by one who, like Giotto before him, looked at his theme from the outside. That success is attested by the establishment for all time, so far as the centuries have been able to judge, of this picture as the final expression of the idea of the " Last Supper." In the mere framework of its composition it was not new, and that composition has been echoed many times since. Save in a single essential, the placing of the principal figure on the hither side of the table, it had already been used with considerable power by Andrea del Castagno : but here the plastic strength of del Castagno, the spatial depth of Masaccio, the grace of Verrocchio, the dramatic simplicity and directness of Giotto, are all informed with the science of this giant among men, and become under his generalship a world-compelling force.

It is one of the strange contradictions of art that the least emotional of painters should have arrived at so complete a command of the emotions of others, though leaving behind him scarcely more than the wreck of his unfinished experiments, while he who was perhaps the most inspired by personal emotion of all the Florentines, Michelangelo, lives rather by the awe his work awakens, and by the sympathy that he evokes for himself, in his struggles with his art, than by any power to sway us this way and that by the subject that he portrays. We feel with Michelangelo, rather than being made to feel by him in our own despite.

The pupil of Ghirlandajo, an artist in the teeth of family opposition, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1400–1450) was a sculptor by instinct and a painter perforce. As a sculptor, he harks back rather to Donatello than to Verrocchio : for though there is in his work no vestige of that faint Gothicism which lingered so exquisitely in Donatello, there is on the other hand no note of the delicacy and restraint of Verrocchio, which, combined with the cold vigour of Leonardo, has given us the world's greatest sculptural equestrian portrait, that of Colleoni at Venice. Perhaps only of Michelangelo's sculpture can it be said with truth that it conveys the impression of the living figure released from the imprisoning stone ; of the unfinished statues of the " Captives " for the tomb of

Pope Julius II it is almost painfully true. The dominant impression of effort to the point of exhaustion which runs through all Michelangelo's work is the keynote of his attitude towards the arts that he practised : their sole source of rest, their sole claim to finality, is to be found in the underlying architectural sense which redeems them from fretfulness and emotional extravagance. The " Holy Family " in the Uffizi is surely the most powerfully constructed design ever enclosed within a circle ; giving the fullest value to that circle by the harmonious curves of drapery, yet held rigidly together by the pyramidal grouping of the principal figures, it is, as it were, sculpture at once reduced to a painted decorative design and reinforced by architectural stability : and the same qualities of architectural stability and coherence, combined with a massiveness of modelling that would be turbulent if it were not so controlled, are the outstanding qualities of that most glorious compromise, the roof of the Sistine Chapel. " I am no painter," said this unwilling victim of papal caprice ; and he proceeded to translate sculpture into draughtsmanship and light and shade, and to transform a plaster barrel into an airy triumph of architectural design.

In the painted panels to which he reduced by this device the more purely pictorial area of his task, he returns to a simplicity of design that once again takes us back to Giotto's economy of means, and here and there, as for example in the figures of Adam and Eve in the " Expulsion from Eden," reminds us with startling force of Masaccio's power and method of dramatic handling of isolated figures : and there is an unexpected aptitude for linear design in the sweeping majesty of the outstretched figures in the panel of the " Birth of Adam." Though in these panels the figures are still treated almost as sculpture, there is a wonderful restraint in the modelling, causing them to sink back into their proper relation to the scheme as a whole, by contrast with the greater forcefulness of the single figures filling the spandrels of the simulated vault. Here again his architectural sense saves Michelangelo from losing his balance in the stress of emotional expression.

Taking them all in all, the surprising thing about the Florentine painters who achieved greatness and lasting name in the two centuries from 1300 to 1500 is not that there were so many of them, but that there are so few of them who really marked a definite forward step in their art.

Giotto and Masaccio can tell us all there is to know of the first hundred years' progress in narrative and decorative design ; Andrea del Castagno and Uccello contributed to the realisation of Masaccio's aims. Botticelli summed up the 14th century in terms of the knowledge of the 15th, and there stayed his hand. Ghirlandajo carried on the torch where Masaccio had laid it down : and Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo turned to their own ends and glorified by their own genius, each in his own way, an art already developed for their use.

When the fire of Savonarola's eloquence swept the studios of Florence, and the vicissitudes of the Florentine republic drove Leonardo and Michelangelo afield, and silenced Botticelli for many years, it seemed as though the tale of progress might be ended : but when Baccio della Porta (1475–1517) became, under Savonarola's influence, Fra Bartolommeo of the Dominican order, religious art in Florence took a new lease of life, and both in his lifelong partnership with Mariotto Albertinelli (1474–1515) his fellow pupil in the schools of Cosimo Roselli and Piero di Cosimo, and also when working alone for the Dominicans, Bartolommeo showed that there was something still to be added to the domain of Florentine painting. When by burning, at Savonarola's instance, all the studies he had made under Piero di Cosimo, he had cut himself finally adrift from the pretty paganism of the brand-new Renaissance, he had to turn elsewhere for guidance, it was the scientific restraint of Leonardo da Vinci which influenced him first ; and indeed there seems to have been in Bartolommeo, for all his true religious fervour, something of the cool temper of Leonardo, at any rate so far as his practice of his craft was concerned : for he was able, as no Florentine before him had been able, to draw lessons from sources outside Florence, and to turn to truly Florentine account the air and grace of Umbria and the rich colour sense of Venice, now at last taking her rightful place in the world of painters. Though it was in Florence that he had learnt the use of the oil medium, it was in Venice, whence it had come, that he was able to realise its value in the control and enrichment of colour, and from Venice also he derived the practice of painting upon canvas ; and these technical advantages gave to him and to Albertinelli with him, full scope for their freedom of design and sweeping fluidity of draughtsmanship.

His susceptibility to the influence of his great contemporaries is remarkable, and no less remarkable is the dignity and self-possession with which he availed himself of it. In his frescoes at Pian' di Mugnone, in the Dominican hospital whither, towards the end of his life, failing health often took him, there are hints of the grandeur and solidity of modelling of Michelangelo, and of the sweetness and grace of Raphael. Yet he is always nobly himself, and even when, as in his great picture in Lucca Cathedral, he boldly adopts the purely Umbrian device of setting fully lighted figures on either side against a dark architectural framework that encloses the central group, he remains individual and Florentine, sculptural rather than aerial, in his outlook and in the quality of his drawing and colour.

Bartolommeo is always, even at his tenderest, monumental. The strange partnership between the Dominican friar and the innkeeper Albertinelli was one based upon a deep personal affection and a profound aesthetic unity of outlook : there is no work of the one to which the other could not have given his blessing : and yet it is possible to trace in Albertinelli a greater liveliness, a more colloquial form of reverence for his subject, a more whole-hearted surrender to the sensuous charm of Umbrian influence ; nearer than Bartolommeo, and far nearer than any other Florentine, he approached to the rendering of the movement of light through atmosphere and to the pervasion of colour by light. The " Salutation " in the Uffizi, but for the sculptural modelling of features, hands and drapery, might almost be an Umbrian picture ; but since, precisely by reason of these differences, he retained his hold upon the sculptural tradition of the Florentine realists, while utilising to the full the decorative elements of his design, his work may be regarded as the point of convergence of the two lines of development which had diverged at the beginning of the 15th century. If we feel that he was not so great an artist as Bartolommeo, this is rather due to modern predilections in favour of unadulterated plastic vigour than to any inherent defect in the painter himself ; and it may also be that the single-hearted devotion of Bartolommeo to the religious aspect of his work may have something to do with his greater hold upon our imagination.

Certain it is, that with these two painters the story of creative Florentine painting ends ; for however easily we may be carried away by the

exquisite technical fluency of Andrea del Sarto, who, like Bartolommeo and Albertinelli, was a pupil of Piero di Cosimo, we can never feel in his presence the profound respect that is inspired by them. It is difficult to say exactly why this is so. Andrea was so versatile in his sympathies, so well equipped by his study both of Leonardo and Michelangelo to attack every conceivable problem of modelling and design, so sure in his handling of every medium, that there should be no fault to find ; and indeed it is as " the faultless painter " that he was known in his own day. He could achieve in turn the balanced design of the frescoes that he painted for the Servites, of the life of St. Philip, the rich colour and dignified yet intimate atmosphere of the " Nativity of the Virgin," the last of his works for the same convent (1514), and the cold simplicity of the " Disputà " at San Gallo (1517) ; and could also approach so nearly to the monumental grace of Bartolommeo in the " Madonna dell' Arpie " (Uffizi) ; he could paint a portrait like that of " The Sculptor " in the London National Gallery, in which an exquisite sense of tone and design is allied with a tenderness of human sympathy that seems to subordinate the whole of his finished art to the rendering of a fellow-man's inmost soul ; and in the " Madonna del Sacco " all these qualities are combined with a liveliness and almost laughing charm which captivates the mind even as it satisfies the senses.

Yet he was not truly great. In him are foreshadowed the frigid sentimentalities of Sassoferrato, the facile emotions of Guido Reni, the cloying sweetness of Carlo Dolci, and the vulgarity of the host of uninspired craftsmen who were to prostitute Italian art in the next two centuries. Lack of imaginative and of creative instinct is perhaps the explanation of the streak of intrinsic triviality which shows itself now and then in his work. For all its beauty of drawing, colour and modelling, the " St. John the Baptist " that he painted, intending to buy back with it the forfeited favour of the King of France, is a second-rate work, a mere piece of showy genre, utterly devoid of inspiration. We need scarcely discuss the question, whether it was the influence of Lucrezia del Fede that ruined his character, and with it his art in all but its technical aspects, or whether his own inherent weakness is to blame. It is enough that Andrea del Sarto stands as an incontrovertible refutation to those who would have us believe that art is no more than the perfect expression,

by perfectly controlled means, of the artist's personality, whether that personality be noble or base.

Although as a painter, Bronzino (1502–1572) cannot be compared with Andrea del Sarto, there is in his work a kind of obstinate adherence to the ideals of a Florence that was passing into history, a kind of stern dignity in spite of the falling standards of his day, that command our admiration and respect. With none of Leonardo's cynical insight into humanity, he gave to his portraits a grim vitality which is infinitely impressive ; and in his more fantastic exercises in design, such as the "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time" in the London National Gallery, he displays a mastery both of form and of linear pattern reminiscent of the most elaborate achievements of Botticelli, the most plastic compositions of Michelangelo. Bronzino has been under-rated because his outlook is towards the past rather than the future. With a glorious past behind him, and a decadent and depressing future well within his view, he had every excuse ; at least he upheld the dignity of Florentine art beyond its day.

It is impossible to follow here more than a very little way, the reactions of Florence upon the painting of the Lombard school. It has always been a puzzling question, why the formative influence in that most sentimental school should have been the most inhuman of all Florentines. The work of Leonardo in Milan was largely the outcome of his avoidance of the uncongenial atmosphere of a Florence deprived of such princely patrons as he needed to give scope to his art ; and we may perhaps be forgiven for observing that even so independent a mind as his was not above attuning its outlook to that of his new environment. It may almost seem like heresy to suggest that Leonardo the master learned anything from Milan ; but it is difficult to believe that the painter of the distorted fury of the "Battle of Anghiari" and of the sombre mystery of "Our Lady on the Knees of St. Anne" would ever have developed the power of sentimental appeal which informs the "Last Supper" and the "Madonna of the Rocks" in any other but Lombard surroundings. Therefore it is not surprising to find that Luini (1470–1533), the greatest of all the Lombard painters, uses no more than the body of Leonardo's art, and that the soul of it is all that sweetness to which his master had only made concessions under stress of circumstance.

Indeed, Luini, while he is wholly Italian in form, and Leonardesque at that, is remote from Florence and from Leonardo in sentiment, and only Italian by force of association. There is far more real affinity in his " Holy Family " in the Liechtenstein collection to Holbein's " Mayer Madonna," than to any Florentine picture : and the colour-sense displayed in his " Burial of St. Catherine " in the Brera is nearer to that of Central Europe than of Tuscany, in all save the decorative instinct which controls it. Ambrogio di Predis (1459–1537), on the other hand, is by very reason of the closeness of his association with Leonardo, a shadowy figure ; for he surrendered to the personality of the master so completely all that he brought of his own to the practice of his art, that we may well wonder whether it may not have been from him, a young painter when Leonardo arrived in Milan, that the latter took the first hints of the new form that his art, essentially the art of a courtier for all its greatness, must take in order to consolidate its position in its new home. However this may be, the school of Milan as a whole was never cohesive or deeply founded, but was subject to rapid and often puzzling modification by contact, now with Florence, now with Siena, and again with Verona and Venice, while retaining as its predominant characteristic the formula imposed upon it by Leonardo da Vinci, and, as it would seem, invented by him expressly to that end.

The main stream of Florentine art, then, was deep and swift, but it flowed in a narrow channel. Its cross-currents were strong, but they were self-contained, and though for a time they might diverge, they came together in the end to swell the volume of a single tide.

III. UMBRIAN SCHOOL

THE story of Umbrian painting begins in a faltering and spasmodic fashion. The great Umbrian focus of the art at Assisi had been, during the lifetimes of Cimabue, Giotto, Duccio and Simone Martini, the meeting ground of the artists of Florence and Siena, one might almost say, the battle-ground of their conflicting aims. There had been neither need nor room for local development in the immediate presence of these pioneers. The most that Umbria could do was to look on, and to store up for use to her own ends when the time should come, the knowledge brought to her from outside.

The time seemed long in coming ; and when it came, it was from Siena rather than from Florence that Gentile da Fabriano (1360–1428) derived the main essentials of his craft. In his work, much though he was esteemed alike in Florence, Rome and Venice, there is no hint of Florentine sternness, but more than a little of the gaiety and facile emotion of Siena.

There is, however, in every work of his that we know, an added quality, which he was perhaps the first of all Italian artists to develop into a dominant characteristic, namely a kind of naive but conscious grace, a tenderness of sentiment, which unlike that of Simone Martini, does not set our interest wandering from figure to figure, but welds and unifies his whole design. " The Adoration of the Magi " at Berlin is crammed with subsidiary incident, in which we can see plainly the influence of Martini : yet the movement of each figure leads us inevitably to the next, throughout the design, which is rigidly and arbitrarily decorative, for all its liveliness and variety of human interest.

His work produced no immediate following in Umbria, and indeed had more direct influence in Venice than anywhere else in Italy : but by a roundabout route, it came back to Perugia with Benozzo Gozzoli twenty years after Gentile was dead, and found its indigenous interpreter in Gozzoli's Umbrian pupil Benedetto Bonfigli, who first among the Umbrians revealed a glimpse of the native instinct for aerial tone which neither Florentine nor Sienese could ever have taught him. Following closely the decorative tradition of closely packed forms and brilliant

variety of colours of which Gozzoli was a supreme exponent, he yet infused into all his colour a unity, a pellucid and penetrating overtone which even in an elaborately set narrative painting like the " Burial of St. Herculanus " or a piece of mystic symbolism in descriptive form, like the " Vision of St. Bernard," gives a hint of naturalism unknown to painting before his day.

Niccolò da Foligno (1430–1502) displays the naturalistic bent of Umbria in a different and less pleasing direction, for there is in his work a violence of feeling which amounts to brutality and infects his colour and drawing with a harshness that repels ; and indeed in all the earlier Umbrians there was an earnestness, a depth of sincerity, which shows itself in each one of them in some highly individual fashion. Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (1440–1521), for example, though as a colourist he is often harsh and sombre, never lost his primary quality of command of tone, far exceeding that of the Florentines from whom he learned. First among these was Benozzo Gozzoli, and later, when he felt more forcibly the need for plastic expression, Antonio Pollaiuolo. He was, in fact, groping after a depth of atmospheric space in his composition, perhaps feeling that space alone could account naturally for the tonal relations of colours of which he was instinctively aware.

Yet, side by side with him in Umbria, a Tuscan of the south, Piero della Francesca (1416–1492) was attacking in no groping fashion the problem of spherical, rather than atmospheric space in composition. A mathematician of genius and a profound theologian, he attacked the task with mathematical precision and with theological gravity. Subduing all decorative effect to secondary importance by keeping colour within a cool and unobtrusive scale, and reducing dramatic effect by the rigidity of his figure drawing, he concentrated his skill upon the arrangement of his composition in a scheme of apparently accidental curves so as to present to the subconscious vision the diagram of a hollow sphere drawn in perspective ; and by the gradation of tones and gradual suppression of detail in the distance of his picture, he actually succeeded in painting emptiness ; a notable example is the " Baptism in Jordan " (London N.G. 665), where the cold, silver-grey tone of the whole enhances the atmospheric effect of the linear design.

This alliance between design and tone, in which the supreme quality

of Piero della Francesca lies, is, however, for the most part absent from the work of his immediate successors. For while Luca Signorelli (1441–1523) shows, even in a minor work like the " Adoration of the Shepherds," in the London National Gallery, and far more in his terribly forcible " Last Judgment " at Orvieto, a remarkable command of spatial design, this is obscured, at any rate in the former work, by the harshness of colour and aggressive and restless plasticity of the figures, and by the lack of tonal control : and on the other hand, Melozzo da Forli (1438–1494) has a far more subtle and varied use of colour, and a tonal control which must surely be traceable to his close association with Justus of Ghent, who possessed a natural northern susceptibility to, and control of, colours ; yet in his work, spatial composition is very limited and timid, so that the rich colour lacks air and space to justify it.

It was in the succeeding generation of the painters of Perugia, the pupils of Signorelli, Bernardino di Betto, called Pinturicchio (1454–1513), and Pietro Perugino (1446–1523) that the Umbrian genius for spatial composition, with its (to them) natural corollary of atmospheric tone, found fuller and more consistent expression.

Of these Pinturicchio, though by far the inferior in draughtsmanship, in spatial composition and in tonal unity, indeed, in all the technical essentials of his craft, yet represents the very highest point reached by any Umbrian artist in that peculiarly Umbrian genre, of which Gentile da Fabriano was the first exponent, namely that of gay and lively narrative. This is the outstanding quality of the humblest Umbrian painter of cassone-panels, and, though it would perhaps be irreverent to describe Pinturicchio as a cassone-painter *in excelsis*, we cannot help seeing in his frescoes of the " Life of Moses " in the Sistine Chapel (1482), and even more in his last work, the story of Aeneas Silvius in the Cathedral Library at Siena, the counterpart in painting of the novello, the same romantic story-telling instinct, the same lightness of touch and happy knack of coherent design ; and this is mainly because, in spite of weak anatomy, dangerous prettiness of detail, and a tendency to overcrowding, he never fails to set his incidents in a world in which there is room for light and air. Nothing could be more dramatically unconvincing than his " Return of Ulysses " in the London National Gallery (911), with its boneless figures and simpering grace ; but since the whole spirit of the scene is

set, by the wide space of fantastic sea and land on to which the window of Penelope looks out, in the key of happy make-believe, we are fain to take it as it comes, and as it was meant to come, light-heartedly and with uncritical gratitude.

It is a different matter when we come to Perugino. For here is a painter whom no difficulty of the craft need have dismayed ; who in his command over the subtle gradations of colour that distance lends, in his understanding of those principles of linear design that Piero della Francesca evolved, and in his mastery of decorative design in three dimensions, is unrivalled in all Italy ; yet he chooses, of set purpose, charm rather than dignity, grace rather than strength, even mannerism rather than style. His was the most purely aesthetic outlook of all Italian painters, not even excepting Raphael : and it is plain that to him the loveliest thing in the world that the eyes could see was the glowing ambience of its empty spaces between earth and heaven. This was his *raison d'être* as a painter, and to it he subordinated the vitality of his figures, in it he enclosed the soft rich modelling of all his forms : and, because to him this beauty was all-pervasive and all-sufficient, and if a thing was beautiful it could never pall, he cheerfully surrendered originality, and was content to repeat again and again the same sweet abstractions of form, the same still, memorable dreams of colour bathed in glowing aerial tone.

Small wonder that Michelangelo could not brook his aid in the painting of the Sistine roof ; yet, but for Perugino, it is to be doubted whether Raphael Sanzio (1483–1521), in his short life of meteoric brilliance, could have added power to grace, dignity to charm, and the supreme achievement of decorative design to unfailing beauty of individual form. For Raphael creates the spaces that he fills so perfectly, expanding into immensity of air the restricted wall or the circumscribed altar-piece, and then so setting his figures in their world, that for all their vigour of action we can never visualise an altered line. The noble forms, massed or isolated, the bold flight of rising steps unbroken by any figure, the enclosing architectural design, and the empty space beyond, contribute, each in its degree, to the restful finality of the " Disputà." The " Parnassus " is simpler in design, but no less inspired in its use of the lunette space that it fills ; and we need only think of the " Granduca Madonna,"

the " Madonna di San Sisto," or the " Belle Jardinière," to realise that here is the perfect master of decoration in terms of three dimensions ; for, unlike Perugino, he does not subordinate forms to aerial space, nor does he subordinate space to the dramatic emphasis of form like Michelangelo, but keeps a harmonious balance between the two, thus re-asserting and re-stating the primarily decorative function of his craft. Illusion is not his aim, but rather to bring within the two dimensions of a wall or of a canvas the aesthetic values of a tridimensional world.

IV. VENETIAN SCHOOL

NORTH-EASTWARD from the foothills of the Appennines there lies a different Italy from that which was dominated by the Tuscan genius of Florence. Padua was its intellectual centre, and from Padua to Venice eastward, to Ferrara and Bologna southward, and westward to Verona and Brescia, radiated the humanistic and artistic lessons of the Renaissance. Thus it was that these north-eastern schools of painting, each in its own way, put to widely varying uses the academic culture that they had received ready-made from the greatest university of the 15th century.

Theirs was an easier temperament than that of the Tuscan, a more peaceful life than that of the fierce Perugian. The princes of Mantua and Ferrara were noble patrons of the arts, and painting was from the first under their ægis a splendour of estate rather than a religious or a communal necessity ; while, apart even from their world, standing with her back to Italy and with her face to the eastward, and to the seas of wide adventure, was Venice, a free republic so secure in the wealth of her citizens, so deeply founded in the spirit of individual liberty and national solidarity, as to be serenely independent of all influences that she did not choose to court, a city of princes and a princess among cities.

Venice was conceived by the spirit of freedom, and born of adventure ; and by adventure she kept the freedom that was her heritage. The Bride of the Sea, she brought as her dowry only her spirit of bold enterprise ; and from the sea she gained knowledge and wealth beyond all the cities of Italy.

Where the rest of Italy was parochial, or at the most provincial in its outlook, Venice was national and even racial. Byzantium had given her at first hand her tradition of the arts, not as a cold survival from an alien past, but as a living thing. Her merchants took the banner of St. Mark into strange seas, and her war-galleys bore the hosts of the iniquitous Fourth Crusade to the walls of Constantinople ; and by the middle of the 14th century, Marco Polo, and men of his like, had penetrated into the heart of ancient Asiatic civilisations and had returned with stories

of a world unknown to the most learned, undreamt by the most speculative minds of the Italian centres of art and learning.

It had been believed until recently that Venice, content with Byzantine symbolism, and with the durable technique of mosaic, had lagged far behind the rest of Italy in the art of painting ; but the discovery of remains, in the Sala del Maggiore Consilio of the Doge's Palace, of a great " Paradiso " in fresco by a Paduan artist, Guariento, dating from the latter half of the 14th century, arouses the suspicion that much Venetian painting in this medium, so entirely unsuitable to the damp atmosphere of Venice, may have perished and left no trace, as the frescoes of Giorgione a century later disappeared even within the artist's short lifetime. The works on a small scale, by Antonio Veneziano (fl. 1368), whose name suggests that he was known to the world of art outside his native city, and of Francesco del Fiore (d. 1398), suggest, by their arrangement in the customary setting of the elaborate architectural framework of an " ancona " or built-up altarpiece, Sienese rather than Florentine influence : and the romantic quality of the Venetian mind would indeed have found the Florentine models of the day lacking alike in ardour and in gaiety.

For Venice stood apart from the rest of Italy not only in geographical position and outlook, but also in race and climate. Her ancestry was not Italian, but Alpine, not Latin nor Etruscan, but Celtic and Germanic ; and her skies are not the clear unyielding skies of Florence and Perugia, whose light reveals the least modulation of form, but by its very intensity reduces colour, and with it the appreciation of subtle grades of colour, to a minimum. In Venice, the atmosphere is drenched with colour-laden moisture, changing with every hour of the day ; and while form is still clear-cut and bold in contrast of light and shade, it yields always to the prevailing note of colour of the moment. Thus the Venetians, romantic yet practical, adventurous though conservative, independent yet eager to learn, looked upon painting from the very first with eyes trained as no other Italian eyes could be, to see colour and form as one, and both as little fixed as light iself.

Thus, in the study of Venetian painting, we have always to bear in mind the fact that while to the Florentine, the Sienese, and even in a great degree the Umbrian, colour meant the arrangement of colours, but

that to them each colour was absolute, to the Venetian colour meant, to all intents and purposes, a prevailing note, an atmospheric tone derived from the light by which the colours were seen.

Not unnaturally, when Venice did turn, at the beginning of the 15th century, to outside sources for guidance, it was from an Umbrian artist that she derived her first knowledge of the new art which had by then completely superseded the Byzantine tradition upon which Venetian painting, so far as it had gone, had been chiefly based. It is true that Guariento had progressed far beyond mere Byzantinism, but so far as we can judge from the fragmentary remains of his frescoes, they were loose in drawing and haphazard in composition ; and when the son of Francesco del Fiore, Jacobello, whose painting life extended from about 1400 to 1439, came in contact with Gentile da Fabriano, he immediately responded to the influence of the Umbrian painter, gaining thereby both in drawing and in arrangement of design.

It was, however, the influence of Gentile da Fabriano, who had been invited by the Republic to decorate the Palace of the Doges, upon Antonio Vivarino of Murano and his partner Giovanni d' Alemagna (doubtless a German, from his name), and upon Jacopo Bellini, which laid the broad foundations of a distinctive and progressive Venetian school of painting. The school of Murano ran through three painting generations of Vivarini, Antonio, his much younger brother and pupil Bartolommeo (1430–1499) and Alvise, his son (1444–1502), who was the pupil of Bartolommeo. The first of these, with his northern partner, foreshows the Venetian trend in his broad, soft shadows, his bold but rather unobservant modelling, and his forcible rendering of character, but owes the dignity and grace of his composition within its very simple limits to Gentile da Fabriano. Bartolommeo, with still greater vigour of characterisation, has a magnificent sense of colour, and an almost grim majesty of composition. His " St. Mark between Saints " in the Frari Church at Venice, is a glorious composition, revolving as it were round the pivotal glow of the red robe of the central saint ; he is never tender, and has no sweetness, but there is power in every stroke, and confidence in every line. Some of this austere magnificence he undoubtedly derived from Mantegna, the great godfather of Venetian art, but the strong humanity of his work is all his own. Alvise Vivarini,

with no less dignity, uses colour with greater subtlety and reserve, and displays, as in his " Sta. Chiara " in the Accademia at Venice a surprising quietude of tone. The picture, with its subdued scheme of black and grey, with ivory flesh tones, is inspired by and attuned to the emaciation and pallor of the saint, and leaves a startling and lasting impression of cold dignity masking depth of feeling.

The school of Murano, however, was destined to be merged in that of Venice, with its wider outlook and greater opportunities ; and here again the same influences contributed to the first progress towards the foundation of a school able to hold its own against the outside world of Italy. Jacopo Bellini, of whose own work we know surprisingly little, was, like Antonio Vivarino, captured by the skilful charm of the work of Gentile da Fabriano in the Doge's Palace, and followed the Umbrian painter to Florence and to Rome ; it is even possible that he worked as his assistant ; and the association between the two was so intimate that Gentile da Fabriano stood sponsor to Bellini's first-born son in 1428, and gave him his own name. Whatever Jacopo Bellini may have learnt for the benefit of his own practice of painting from Gentile—and of this we know nothing with certainty—he gained for Venice as a whole one immense benefit. He grasped the essentiality of draughtsmanship and coherent design, and strove with all his might to ensure that his two sons should pass the message on. The warm and luxuriant colour-sense of Venice were actually a disadvantage to her painters in the earlier stages of her craft, for they might have led, as they did centuries later in England, to neglect of form and decorative balance ; and when Bellini sought to train his sons in the way they should go, it was to the centre of all precise knowledge in Northern Italy, the University town of Padua, that he sent them, and indeed went with them to give to their master and their school the benefit of his own knowledge of colour, and of such composition as he had learned from Gentile da Fabriano.

Here, among the scholars and the humanists, dwelt the astute tailor-painter, Squarcione, a man with no more artistic talent of his own than would enable him to scrape a place in the Guild of Painters, but possessed both of a rare taste in the collection of fragments of ancient sculpture (as a bait in the first instance for his cultured clients) and of a quick eye for genius in others. In 1441 there came to the studio of

Squarcione, at once as adopted son and apprentice, a nameless orphan from Mantua, in whom Squarcione had seen, even at ten years old, the signs of the genius which was destined to make Mantegna one of the greatest figures in the history of art. This boy, who became a master-painter at fourteen, and who would seem to have been born a draughtsman, grew up in years and skill among the remnants of the ancient world, and their stony passion entered into his very soul. Though there is a fervour in his work which gives it an immortality of human appeal, all of it is rendered in so sculptural a cast of modelling as to produce the impression that Mantegna's aim was to bring the sculpture of ancient Rome to life, and that, failing that, he would himself rather have been a dead Roman, and so, immortal, than a living Italian with but one span of life before him.

This was the austere enthusiast with whom Gentile Bellini and his younger brother were associated in the school of Squarcione ; and if we consider, side by side in the London National Gallery, his painting of the " Agony in the Garden," painted for the Podestà of Padua, and that of Giovanni Bellini of the same subject—both derived from a design given them as an exercise in composition by Jacopo Bellini from his sketch book—it is easy to understand exactly what each gained from the other. For in the work of Mantegna, though his own interpretation of the scene lays stress upon the plastic drawing of form, upon foreshortening, and upon the mystic aspect of the subject, he has caught a sombre richness of colour from the dawning sky of Bellini's version ; while Bellini has laboured, despite the paramount importance which colour and light held for him, to render form with exactitude, and to balance the masses of his design.

The interchange of influence was lasting. For though in his latest work, towards the end of a life of nearly seventy-seven years, Mantegna almost forsook colour altogether in his devotion to form, in such earlier works as the " Madonna of the Rocks " in the Uffizi, the colour is as rich and strong as the drawing is severe, and in another work, the " St. George " in the Accademia at Venice, he shows actual subtlety of colour-sense in his use of cool tones and atmospheric space, bound together by strong and vivid touches of red and orange and green.

Of the two brothers, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, the former learned

more, on the whole, from the tradition of his godfather than from Mantegna. His power of lively narrative and complicated composition is well shown by his " Miracle of the True Cross " in the Accademia, and he was successful also in the not very inspiring genre of processional pictures, with their intricate and topographically valuable setting of the Venice of his day : and in these a quiet and keenly observant colour-sense is also to be found. It is, however, in portraiture that he displays the immense difference which existed between the Venetian and other Italian ideas as to the function of painting. Except in Venice and the regions under her influence, portraits were pictures first, and governed by the same laws that ruled all other painting. In Venice, in the hands of Gentile Bellini, and of all Venetians after him, portraits are personalities first, and pictures only by reason of the fact that they were made by painters. His portrait of a Dominican (known as " St. Dominic "), in the London National Gallery, is a living man, dour and grim and old. The black and green scheme of colour, with its skilful disposition of notes of red and white, is pictorial and decorative ; but it seems to arise naturally out of the character of the subject and to be entirely subordinated to it. It is as though Gentile had translated his instinct, that of human sympathy and understanding, into terms of another, that of sensitive reaction to the influence and mood of colour.

It is to Giovanni Bellini, however, that the title of the father of Venetian painting properly belongs. Always maintaining the closest possible touch with the life of his city, always supremely sensitive to its material beauty, he yet preserved throughout his long life the most perfect control both of his art and of the emotions that inspired it. Though in recent years many portraits have been ascribed to him, we must still turn to his marvellous portrait of the Doge Leonardo Loredano (London N.G. 189) to see in its full splendour his command of colour, which enabled him to turn the intensely living presentment of a human being into a decorative design of blue and white and gold, not obscuring, but actually enhancing the vigour of the wrinkled face and shrewd ye kindly eyes. The drawing is exquisite, precise yet free, and the spacing of the colours is as decorative as the work of any formal Florentine, yet without a hint of formality. No less free, no less supple, and yet as decoratively immobile, are his " Madonna of the Trees " in the Acca-

demia, and the " Madonna of the Pomegranate " in the London National Gallery ; and in these is the added joy of distant landscape and evening sky glowing with the source of all Venetian colour, intruding gently, as though to explain and justify the simple Venetian veracity of the types of Our Lady and the Child. While Bellini never for an instant forgets the dignity of his subject, and the sanctity of the Holy Mother and her Son, he, like all other Venetians, worshipped at close quarters with Divinity and all the saints, and painted as he saw them the loveliest of his own people in their guise.

This religious intimacy of the Venetians is always making itself known to us through their painting : and it was the intimacy of the Venetian with every aspect of human life that he approached, that forced him continually onward to experiment, invariably with the object of bringing himself and his art into closer touch with the life and needs and pleasures of his fellow men. Whereas in Florence art was ecclesiastical, communal or princely, in Venice it was domestic as well, in a degree that was impossible in the other states of Italy, where personal security, and the undisturbed enjoyment of individual wealth, did not exist as they existed in Venice.

Bellini lived long, and never ceased to learn. He was seventy-five when Dürer visted Venice in 1505–6, yet he was still eagerly enquiring of the northern painter as to his method of using oil, though he himself had practised in the new medium for many years. He saw the whole life-work of his exquisite pupil Giorgione (1477–1510) and before he died Titian (1487?–1576), Giorgione's fellow-worker and probably Bellini's own pupil, had carried Venetian painting well towards that point at which it challenged all Italy and all the world, and Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1450–1522), another of his pupils, of Istrian birth, had reasserted the reminiscence of Gentile da Fabriano which still hung about Venetian painting, in a form enlivened by vivid observation of the many and various aspects of life that went to make up the daily experience of Venetians, living as they did upon the fringe of the Eastern world. To all of these, and to many more beside, by his pre-eminent position and example, he passed on the discipline of draughtsmanship, that he had brought from Padua, to control and direct their innate love of colour. To all he imparted his own dignity to temper their exuberant joy of life.

Yet painting could not have fulfilled its great Venetian destiny but

for certain technical innovations which adapted it to Venetian needs. The climate of Venice, with its moisture-laden atmosphere, demanded a medium more durable than fresco, and the Venetian sense of colour, which was the direct outcome of this same climatic condition, needed for its satisfaction both richer and more softly blended colour than the traditional process of tempera painting could provide. It was, strangely enough, a painter from the far south, the Sicilian Antonello da Messina, who brought to Venice the oil medium which was the making of Venetian painting. There is no doubt that he had learnt the use of the medium from the work of Jan van Eyck, which he had seen in Rome. The report which made him actually a pupil of van Eyck is obviously false, for he was but a child when the Flemish master died, and cannot ever have met him ; but that he modelled both his method and his outlook on the study of such work of van Eyck's as he had seen is beyond doubt. In his paintings we can trace both the vigorous human sentiment and the rich colour of the northerner, and by bringing these to Venice he planted them in exactly that patch of Italian soil in which they were bound to take ready root and to flourish exceedingly. In the London National Gallery are three of his works, the " Portrait of a Man " (1141), the " Crucifixion " (1166), painted in 1477, and the " St. Jerome in his Study " (1418), painted, most likely in Venice, in 1475, and all three of these amply demonstrate, by their force of feeling and their rich sense of colour and atmosphere, the extent to which Antonello had assimilated the Flemish outlook upon the function of painting ; and since Venice was at least as much Germanic as Italian in her emotional tendencies, at least as much northern as southern in her colour-susceptibility, her painters grasped with avidity at the possibilities of the new medium as a vehicle of rich colour, and with scarcely less ardour at the use of painting as the means of expressing individual feeling and temperament. At the same time, or a little earlier, they evolved for themselves a development of the old method of painting, for purely transient purposes, upon stretched linen. Painting on this material, for the production of banners and the like for use in the pageants and religious processions which were of common occurrence all over Italy, but more particularly in Venice, was a very ancient practice : but as the power of Venice extended westward on the mainland, it became increas-

ingly the custom for her wealthy citizens to own summer estates along the foothills of the Alps, and to move themselves and their possessions to and from Venice with the change of the seasons ; hence pictures, which had been evolved primarily as mural decorations, came to be movable furniture, and the light and portable character of canvas gave it an advantage over the wooden panel, with its delicate coating of gesso and tempera colours which were liable to crack and flake in being moved from place to place. Thus, together with the evolution of painting in oil on canvas, the " easel picture " came into existence. Furthermore, even for the permanent decoration of great wall spaces, canvas had the immense advantage in Venice over fresco, that it stood away from the wall, and was therefore protected from the damp which ruined fresco, while the oil-colour had far more richness and depth than could possibly be obtained by the swift laying of colour upon wet plaster. The extremes of the effect of these purely technical developments can be appreciated if we consider side by side the Hampton Court " Shepherd," attributed to Giorgione, at one end of the scale, and at the other the " Paradiso " of Tintoretto in the Sala del Maggiore Consilio of the Doge's Palace. The one is an intimate and personal fancy, a " cabinet " picture, the other an immense decorative scheme ; yet in both is a largeness of touch, a fluidity of drawing, and a soft richness of colour, that were utterly beyond the scope of tempera and fresco.

Even so, in the hands of Vittore Carpaccio, the sentiment of Venice, gay, lively and tender, found its romantic expression in a compromise of method : working in tempera on canvas, he contrived to achieve both brilliance of colour and decorative unity, and added to these the quality of the perfect narrative painter, to whom the smallest detail of daily life was significant as " local colour " in his rendering of a scene. Nothing could be more delightful than his insistence upon the barbaric and exotic details of his portrayal of the exploits of St. George in the Church of the Schiavoni. In the scene which depicts the betrothal of St. George and the princess there is a band of turbaned Turks playing upon the most astonishing brass instruments which is a pure delight ; and in his series of the story of St. Ursula, now in the Accademia, the quiet bedroom of the sleeping saint is as much a record of graceful furniture as a masterpiece of rectangular design. Like all the painters of the

Venetian school from first to last, Carpaccio was far too genuinely interested in life, the life of his own day, to be anything but a romantic using all the resources of the Renaissance as they came to him, for his own personal ends. The great joy of Venetian art is that it is never self-conscious, never "artistic" to the exclusion of human interest, though in so far as the school of Murano, in the hands of Cima da Conegliano (c. 1460–1517), continued its separate tradition, we can still see the influence of Gentile da Fabriano at work in the rather studied grace of design and conscious decorative purpose, combined with landscape settings of formal beauty and stylised detail, approaching but timidly to realistic observation. His "Tobias and the Angel" (Accademia) is a good example of this type; but even he relaxes to some extent his formality in the lively group at the foot of the long flight of steps in his "Presentation of the Virgin," in which his realistic rendering of oriental costume has almost Carpaccio's enjoyment of the descriptive aspect of his subject. For earnest and almost painfully conscientious devotion to the craft of painting for its own sake, we must turn to the painter of Ascoli, Carlo Crivelli, who was scarcely Venetian at all, although he scrupulously signed his work "Carolus Crivellus Venetus." Whether or no he studied side by side with Cosimo Tura in the school of Squarcione, it is certain that he shares with the Ferrarese painter an almost fanatical devotion to drawing for its own sake, outdoing Mantegna in self-torturing zeal by as much as he fell short of him in skill. Yet in this he is Venetian, that he never lacks human interest. Himself a queer mixture of ostentation and asceticism, he stamps all his work with these incongruous characteristics, and, in the "Demidoff Altarpiece" (London N.G. 788), even while he loads his "St. Peter" with all the magnificence that gorgeous embroideries and gold can give, setting actual stones in the raised and gilded gesso of mitre and cope, and hanging carved keys by a gilded cord from the painted hand, he cannot resist painting the features of the saint as those of a haunted man, in whose ears the cock-crow rings through all eternity.

Yet his "Annunciation," painted for the Annunciata at Ascoli (London N.G. 739), is at once an exquisite and dream-like fantasy and a jewel of elaborate drawing and rich Renaissance detail. Its minor incident is as full of lively interest as any work of Carpaccio can show; and in another

National Gallery example, the " Madonna del Rondine," painted in his last years, when he proudly signed himself " Carolus Crivellus Miles " for token of the knighthood conferred on him by Prince Ferdinand of Capua in 1490, his St. Sebastian is rather a brilliant dandy than a martyr ; though, as a kind of penitent afterthought, the painter has depicted in the predella his martyrdom with gruesome vigour. It is instructive to observe that in this late work Crivelli is still setting himself little problems of perspective and foreshortening, and failing to solve them. Doubtless he knew his own failings ; and, living for the most part in the comparative retirement of his native Ascoli, he had neither opportunity nor inclination to embark upon those voyages of discovery, half voluptuous and half mystical, which the perfect command of their craft opened to the adventurous spirit of Giorgione and Titian.

To Crivelli, and in a sense to Carpaccio also, the end of the possible development of painting was in sight. To Giorgione, and to Titian following in his footsteps, it stood on the threshold of an unknown world, a world of mystery and imagination. True to the Venetian tradition of bold independence in the use of lessons taken from the common stock of the Renaissance, Giorgione recreated rather the Greek than the Roman spirit. All his work is stamped with the serenity which was the hall-mark of the greatest achievements of Hellenic art, but it is the serenity of Praxiteles rather than of Phidias, for under it there seems always to lurk a brooding melancholy, gentle but intense. The comparison with the tenderly regretful mood of a fourth century stele from the Kerameikos is irresistible.

Little enough survives from his hand, for he wasted, from the point of view of posterity, too much time upon frescoes that scarcely lasted out his own time. Especially we must regret the loss of the work of his full maturity, the frescoes of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, which he executed in collaboration with the young Titian, in 1507, three years before his death ; and of the works which survive, very few are wholly undisputed, for Titian followed him so closely as to render very difficult and uncertain the task of discrimination between his work and that of the younger man. We are fortunate, however, in the certainty that the Castelfranco altarpiece, of Our Lady and the Child enthroned between SS. Liberale and Francis, is his, and in being able to date it as a work

of his younger maturity, painted at the opening of the 16th century. Serene majesty, chivalry, and piety are embodied in the figures of the Mother and Child, the soldier-saint and the humble friar : and open air, full of softly glowing light, fills the distance behind the dark wall and the exalted throne. It is the vision of a yearning dreamer, made clear and stable by the skill of a consummate artist. Here are no problems of drawing, no consciously considered balancing of colour and form. Giorgione has ushered in an era in Venetian painting in which the painter, having no more to learn of mastery of his craft, is free to face the problems of the spirit.

No less in the enigmatic " Adrastus and Hypsipyle " in the Giovanelli Palace Giorgione shows how closely in touch with nature was his genius, and how boldly he could draw upon his observation of the physical aspects of storm and sky and landscape to convey the spiritual atmosphere rather of his mind than of his subject : while that he could absorb the significance of a subject, and could submit his art to its control, is demonstrated by the tragic pathos, alike in human expression, in gloom of colour, and in force of design of his " Christ bearing the Cross," at the Church of San Rocco.

This is no place in which to discuss the many works ascribed to him, about whose authorship controversy is keen : but the very fact that there are so many of them and that in so many cases much may be said in support of their attribution to him, is proof enough of the enormous influence wielded in his own time by this young peasant, who was as much beloved for his personality as for his art. Not only Titian, his true successor, but Catena, perhaps nearest of all to him in romantic tenderness, Lorenzo Lotto, very near to him in the quiet gaiety of his half-length groups of figures, Palma Vecchio, and many another, sought —but all of them in vain—to capture the fey beauty of his art : and all Venice acclaimed this new painting, which though so full of the imagery of the artist's own soul, seemed still to leave so much to the imagination of those to whom it was addressed.

It was fortunate that a long life of unremitting invention and almost unbroken achievement should have been granted to the painter who could best carry on the torch. It may be that Titian completed more than one of the pictures left unfinished by his friend, and for a while it

seemed as though there was little essential difference between their points of view: but there was not, in his younger days, any wistfulness in the real Titian, and it was not long after the death of Giorgione that he was asserting the joy, the exuberant glory of life, and the liveliness of the world in which that life was passed, as the theme which above all called out the fullest powers of his art. No picture in the world is more magnificently buoyant in spirit, more riotously happy, than his "Bacchus and Ariadne" in the London National Gallery. In it, colour and music seem almost interchangeable ideas. The physical world is endowed with a magic of intensified hues, of inspired movement, which, while it does not for one moment detract from the decorative splendour of the set design, forces us to forget decoration in the enthusiastic rush of action. "Venus and Adonis," in the Prado, is no mere frigid piece of antiquity, but a palpitating glow of colour and voluptuous form, in whose presence we find it hard to remember the tortured energy of Michelangelo, the calculated philosophy of Leonardo, and the ordered rhythm of Raphael. For here is life, superhuman in vitality, yet completely human in sympathy, the life of the immortals brought down to an earth that is surely lovelier than their own remote Olympus.

True Venetian that he was, born at Cadore, in the beginnings of the hills, Titian loved those aspects of nature that his city could not show. No painter before him, save only Giorgione, had ever made landscape so inherent a part of the mood of his subject, nor painted with such love the mountains and trees, the fields and flocks of the Veneto and the foothills of the Alps. The background of a relatively unimportant picture, "The Madonna and Child with SS. John Baptist and Catherine" (London N.G. 635), is a marvellous interpretation of a natural landscape enhanced by the supersensitive colour-vision of the artist: and even in the early "Sacred and Profane Love," in which his debt to Giorgione is obvious, in so far as the landscape setting is concerned he has already struck out a definite line of his own: and throughout his career, the landscape sense of Titian enabled him to incorporate with the spiritual aspect of his work the material atmosphere of its setting. The "Charles V at Mühlberg," in the Prado, painted in 1548, is a notable example of this, and a comparison of this picture with the "Bacchus and Ariadne" (1523), which is a quarter of a century earlier in date, shows that the

development of the painter between the two dates was in the main psychological rather than technical.

Again, though there are eight years between the stupendous " Assumption " in the Frari (1518) and the Pesaro Madonna, in the same church, (1526), there is nothing to choose between them in the management of rhythmic design and control of the suggestion of movement. Within less than fifteen years after the death of Giorgione, Venetian art, in the hands of Titian, was full-grown, and in his hands it became rather the record of his own temperament and character than of any artistic development.

Yet there was one respect in which the art of Venice still awaited its supreme exponent : for, despite the long influence of Bellini, drawn direct from Mantegna, draughtsmanship remained the weak point of all Venetian painters. It is probable that when Michelangelo deplored their weakness in this respect, he, as a sculptor by instinct, was thinking more of their subordination of form to colour, which to his Tuscan eyes was a defect, and not a virtue. But the fact remains that even Titian's drawing was fluent rather than sure. It is in his portraits more than in any other genre that this uncertainty is most revealed, for in them there is no overmastering design, no exuberance of spirit to divert our attention : in his portraits Titian himself seems to miss the stimulus of bold design and high-spirited joy of life, for almost all of them are tinged with melancholy, which, in the " Charles V " actually deepens to the sympathetic expression of a very tragedy of exalted loneliness.

Titian made the Italian art of painting a world-heritage ; for he gave to it the colour and the warmth of human sentiment which rendered it intelligible to northern and western Europe. To him, after he was gone, and the great days of Italian art were past, turned Rubens and Velasquez and Reynolds, for help and inspiration. His art is real without materialism, for it sprang straight from the love of life and the beauty of the world, a love which, lover-like, overlooked all the ugliness and inconsistencies of life, and saw only its harmonies, visual and spiritual. Thus, it is sensuous in the noblest meaning of the word, and appeals with equal force to the eye and to the heart, while leaving the mind at rest.

Even so, the greatest Venetian of them all was one who feared neither the severest problems of the craft, nor the harshest realities of existence.

Jacopo Robusti (1518–1594), called Tintoretto because his father was a dyer, was also called " il furioso " from the frenetic speed of his work ; yet he was the greatest natural draughtsman among all Venetians, the truest in his instinct for balance of design, and the pioneer of all Europe in the rendering of light, not merely as the source of colour, but as the very essence of design. An apprentice of Titian, he began his training in an atmosphere of exuberant romance. But Palma Vecchio's influence, derived through Palma's pupil Bonifazio, led him to a greater gravity, and a deeper appreciation of the value of form, than Titian could have taught him : and when he opened his own studio, the ideal that he set up for himself was " the colour of Titian and the drawing of Michelangelo."

Though Tintoretto studied the work of Michelangelo closely and to great profit, gaining thereby a largeness of vision commensurate with his largeness of method, he went far beyond Michelangelo in his application of imaginative idealisation of form to real life. There is not in any of his work a hint of the subordination of reality to the measure of classical form ; on the contrary, he discarded ruthlessly the statuesque qualities of the human form, upon which the Florentine had laid such stress, and gave to every figure that he drew a palpitating vitality and a suppleness of texture only attainable by means of close observation of nature and an astonishing control of the rendering of natural light ; while his exquisite sense of rhythmical design—as seen in his " Mercury and the Graces," or the " Origin of the Milky Way " (London N.G. 1313), and its supreme expression, the " Paradiso " in the Doge's Palace—conveys a sense of concerted movement unparalleled in the history of painting.

His imagination was swift and penetrating, and was firmly founded on a quick and sympathetic grasp of the significance of common things. It has none of the easy joy of Titian, and indeed there are moments when it is almost grim. The great tragedy of the Crucifixion, to him, was the heedless world around the dying figure on the cross, and that world he painted from the life of every day, careless of whether it were beautiful or not, and hung over it the growing shadow of the darkness that covered the earth at the consummation of the sacrifice. The imagination that could visualise, in that scene, an ass munching a faded

palm-leaf, had in it something of sardonic humour, if we may dare to use such a word in so sacred a context. Yet it was precisely this quality in the mind of Tintoretto that redeemed his marvellous fluency from the risk of redundance. Common things that in the hands of Veronese became trivialities calling for just rebuke by the Church itself, were to Tintoretto essential contributions to the expression of his meaning : they were there, not for their own interest, nor to fill a composition, but because they were needed ; and, if we study the complicated design of his wonderful " Marriage of Cana," the astounding and hitherto unparalleled fact will emerge, that it is by no arbitrary method of design, but solely by the masterly control of the light that streams through the windows on the left, of the evening sky in the background, and of the artificial light above, that each figure has been given its due emphasis both in the narrative and the decorative scheme. While Titian showed how an eye might be trained to find beauty that the heart desired, and to be blind to all else, Tintoretto proclaimed that there is beauty—and meaning—in everything whereon light falls.

It was with Tintoretto that the summit of Venetian achievement was reached. The shadow of Spain, stretching from the solid mass of her more westerly domination, was creeping over the freedom of the Republic before his life was over ; and his work was its last expression. That is why, perhaps, the joyous romanticism of Titian gave way, in him, to a sadder though a nobler view of life and of its significance. At any rate, there was already a painter at work, who expressed with splendid ease and brilliance the growing tendency of Venice to hide from reality behind the mask of outward magnificence and carnival.

Paolo Caliari (1528–1588), called Veronese from the place of his birth, came to Venice, about 1558, a full-grown painter with experience of princely patronage, and a set method of courtly painting. In colour sumptuous, and in drawing free and graceful, he had a rare gift of ordered movement in a balanced design, and his larger works are frankly and even ostentatiously decorative. He loved splendour for its own sake. Fine palaces, fine clothes, fine jewels, fine foods, fine fellows, abound in all his work. Nothing comes amiss to him as a theatrical contrast in the rendering of a story, from a lean and pilfering hound to a fat and roystering mercenary guard : but within the narrow

limitations of his outlook upon life, he was a great painter, for despite colloquialisms his work is always stately. The " Feast in the House of Levi " in the Accademia is majestic in the disposition of its figures, graceful in the extreme in its design, and beautifully controlled in colour; and in the many puzzling problems of foreshortening which he had to face in his ceiling paintings, he is never at a loss. Moreover, in the rendering of textures, a remarkable freedom of brushwork gave him certainty of command ; and though, compared with Tintoretto, his rendering of light is formal and unconvincing, he yet contrived to give full expression to his love of vast spaces, of amplitude of room.

But, in the same city and at the very time that Tintoretto was achieving miracles of imaginative realism, Veronese and many other Venetians were content with romantic unreality ; and in this, he was prophetic, for the survival of the Venetian Republic into the 17th century was itself a romantic unreality, a pretty anachronism. Her Eastern trade was dying and her Eastern empire was crumbling under the encroachments of the Turk. The Western world, on which through all her history her back was turned, was opening out new ways to wealth and adventure to her rival Genoa, and she was left behind in the race, to live with her pride and her palaces as reminders of a faded glory.

Paris Bordone (1500–1571), a pupil of Titian, degraded sensuous beauty too often into sensuality, and freedom of design into slovenliness. It would serve no useful purpose to recount the names of painters practising in Venice during the barren years of the following century ; through the sons of Jacopo del Ponte (Bassano), the tradition of Tintoretto was feebly continued ; and the pupil of Padovanino, Pietro Liberi (1605–1687), also maintained a reasonable level of traditional craftsmanship ; but at the end of the century a remarkable revival took place, in which Venice began frankly to live on her past.

The simplest way of visualising the significance of this phase is to place side by side Gentile Bellini's " Miracle of the True Cross " and a typical Venetian canal scene by Canaletto (Antonio Canal, 1697–1768). In the former, the faithful rendering of Venice itself, brick by brick and stone by stone, is merely a setting for the vigorous life that it contains : in the latter, the human figures are vague, generalised puppets, deriving all their semblance of actuality from their surroundings.

Canaletto was far more than a mere topographer, in that he was exquisitely sensitive to the beauty of shifting light and colour, and to the scenic quality of his native city. But he inherited from his scene-painting father a sense of the theatre rather than of real life, and his art is for the most part " decor " rather than either true decoration or true landscape. For all his apparent sincerity and realism, he is essentially theatrical. There are moments when, as in the glorious " View of Murano " in the possession of H.M. the King, he touches a sublime simplicity of composition, which gives the fullest scope to his genuine feeling for atmosphere and light ; and in his rich and fluid handling of pigment, which was so sadly " mechanised " by the host of his wretched imitators, he is the forerunner of our own Wilson, who indeed learned much directly from the study of his work.

At his best, Canaletto epitomises the spirit of 18th century Venice, which took a conscious pleasure in its own faded picturesqueness, and at the same time enjoyed to the full a vigorous if futile existence of romance and intrigue. To this extent, he is intensely sincere, and his swift seizure of the little accidental beauties of his beloved city is the outcome of a real enthusiasm which is totally absent from the dull topographical records that he painted in England during his visit to this country in 1740.

His pupil and fellow-worker on similar lines, Francesco Guardi (1721–1793), has a greater liveliness of characterisation and perhaps more subtlety in the rendering of shifting skies : and the very modern quality of his paint, and the silvery tone of his lighting, have given him lately a popularity surpassing that of Canaletto. His figures have a greater individuality and personal interest, and his drawing of the architecture of Venice is less obtrusively topographical : but it is to be doubted whether he did in fact add anything to the scope of his master's art : and if Canaletto was occasionally dull, Guardi was at least as often trivial.

Still, purely as a painter, Guardi had distinction and charm, and differed from most of Canaletto's followers in being more than a mere imitator ; indeed, even Bernardo Bellotto (1720–1780), the nephew of Canaletto, has lost much of the credit which is actually his due, through the close resemblance of his best work to that of his uncle, for there is

no doubt that many pictures now ascribed to Canaletto are in fact the work of Bellotto ; in the Accademia at Venice itself, there are only two examples of his work ; and one of these, a view of the Grand Canal, showing the campanile of the Carità which fell in 1744, is but doubtfully ascribed to him. If it is his, it is of course an early work, and it would not be unfair to describe it as a second rate Canaletto ; but in his later work, such as the noble " View of Verona " which recently changed hands in Berlin, his deeper and stronger colour, and a fondness for emphatic massing in his composition, show that he possessed no small share of individuality, for which his career as a fashionable Venetian painter in Germany and Poland gave him little scope.

Marieschi, another of Canaletto's pupils, has dignity and some of Canaletto's power in the representation of the lively light of Venice ; but he is little more than a careful imitator. He and Bellotto at least did their best to carry on a good tradition. They may often be dull, but at least it may be claimed for them that they were never frivolous.

Frivolity, however, far more than lack of skill or of feeling for beauty, was the growing bane of this 18th century Venetian painting. It is a far cry from the " Concerts " of Giorgione or Lotto, to the boudoir scenes and glimpses of fashionable life of Pietro Longhi (1702–1785), who for all his training in Bologna and Verona, was Venetian to the core : yet, though he could find no better subjects for his brush than the morning's idleness of a Venetian Lady (Venice, Accademia) or a visit to a menagerie (London N.G. 1101), his sense of subdued and dignified colour was exquisite, and his technique is that of a gentleman of the brush.

The same impression of dignity thrown away upon small things is conveyed by the portraits, in all the delicate charm of pastel, of Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757). This gifted portraitist brought to a marvellous perfection the handling of pale cool notes of colour, with a rare decorative grace and far greater strength of design than the apparent slightness of her work at first reveals.

Yet, that this impression of the waste of power is on the whole flattering to the Venetian artists of the late 17th and 18th centuries, is revealed by the singular failure of one of the most powerful of their number,

when he attacks a subject in which any reserve of strength that he might have been supposed to possess would have found full scope. Giambattista Piazzetta (1683–1754) displays, in a secular subject of a trivial character, the so-called "Indovina" (the Fortune Teller), (Venice, Accademia, 483) an astounding virility, and freedom alike in brush work, design, and characterisation. The colour is livid and the handling of light is harsh, but the picture has a kind of brutal vigour that makes it memorable: yet, when he essays a subject which gives scope to power, power fails him. His three "Crucifixions" in the Accademia, and the "Sacrifice of Isaac" (London, N.G. 1363) are all stamped with a flashy theatricalism and trickiness of method which reveal a lack of depth. After "L'Indovina," with its hint of descent from the forceful naturalism of Tintoretto, the disappointment is keen. Still, Piazzetta was the nearest of all the painters of his day to achieving greatness, and the fault is not so much in himself as in the meretricious atmosphere of his generation.

To two Venetian painters, Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770) and his son Domenico (1727–1804), belongs the distinction of having carried down to little more than a century ago the direct tradition of the Renaissance in Venice. The former, basing himself in design and drawing upon Paolo Veronese, but profoundly influenced in the matter of colour and chiaroscuro by Piazzetta, worked upon a grand scale, both in oil and fresco: but his dignity and deep emotional and religious sincerity were all his own. He fairly earned the title, which has been given him, of "the last of the old masters," for there is fervour as well as masterly skill in all his work. His early frescoes at the Scalzi Church were destroyed by aerial attack during the war; in these the influence of Veronese was patent, but in his later work at the Church of S.M. della Salute, and in the "Life of Anthony and Cleopatra" at the Palazzo Labbia, his independence is fully asserted, and in dignity of feeling and grace of design, these works stand the test of comparison with Veronese himself, and all the better on account of their strongly personal style. This great descendant of the palmy days of Venetian painting died in Madrid, where his work was highly valued, and his son, greatly influenced by Murillo, in the direction of a suavity that weakened his hold upon the nobler aspects of design, returned to Venice

to carry on into the 19th, the traditions of the 16th century, modified by the eclectic elegance of 18th century fin-de-siècle culture, and he is to be remembered with honour, in that, though sublimity never came within his scope, he never sank to vulgarity, but upheld to the end the dignity of his craft.

This vitality of the Venetian School was due to its freedom from affectation, which saved the late painters of Venice alike from pedantry and sentimentality, as it had saved the pupils of her prime from slavish imitation. When Titian told those who came to him from Bergamo for their portraits to go home and sit to their own man, Giambattista Moroni (1520–1578), he paid no idle compliment. True, Moroni could never have painted the people of Bergamo as he did—the superb series in the London National Gallery will suffice to show us how—if he had not learned from Moretto da Brescia (1498–1555) what Moretto in his turn had gained from Titian ; but his portraits are Bergamesque, not Venetian, just because they have the honesty and freedom from affectation that Bellini, Giorgione and Titian had taught the painters of Brescia and Bergamo. In the same way, Moretto, though his early portraits are in the manner of Titian, was rather his Brescian parallel than his follower : and in the painting of religious subjects he was not Venetian at all, but gave free rein to the instinct for cool and silvery tone, natural to one bred between the plains and the grey precipices that stand about Lake Garda. The generous appreciation of Moroni by Titian was no pretence, but simply recognition of the fact that the artist is at his best only when he is free, and in close touch with his subject ; and as it was this love of their own freedom that preserved the vitality of Venetian painters for so long, so it is their respect for the freedom of others which has made them the guides rather than the masters of those who have learned from them, from their own day till now.

V. THE MINOR SCHOOLS—AND THE END

OF the schools of northern Italy that of Verona was the earliest to contribute anything of value to the development of painting ; for in the person of Antonio Pisanello (c. 1397–1455) she produced a painter who, though he founded no school in his native place, carried far and wide in Italy on his many travels his own gospel of vivid and romantic naturalism. The most brilliant portrait-medallist of his own or any other time, he was not prolific in painting, and few of his works survive ; of them the London National Gallery is the fortunate possessor of two, the " Vision of St. Eustace " (1436) and the " SS. George and Anthony the Hermit " (776). In the former, the rich green of the forest, and the amazing truth and liveliness of the drawing of the huntsman-saint, his quarry the stag with the vision of the crucifix between its antlers, the hounds and the wild life of the wood, stand in a category of their own in Italian painting ; in the latter, there is the same keen feeling for landscape, and in the treatment of the figures a strange mixture of realism, mysticism and almost humour, which reveals to us an outlook closely akin to that of Gentile da Fabriano, by whom Pisanello was influenced, but with the addition of a power of observation far exceeding that of the Umbrian painter.

The schools of Milan, through Vincenzo Foppa, of Venice, and of Ferrara, were all touched by the influence of this remarkable painter, and in Verona we may perhaps trace it in the backgrounds of pictures by Liberale da Verona (1451–1535) and Girolamo dai Libri, both of whom were in the first place miniaturists. Indeed, in Pisanello himself there is much of the spirit of the miniaturist and illustrator.

The main sources, however, from which the northern and eastern schools drew their instruction in the craft of painting were those of Padua and Venice. It was from the school of Squarcione and from Mantegna, that Cosimo Tura (1420–1495) derived his passion for draughtsmanship, closely akin to that of Crivelli, but inspired by a harsher and more uncompromising spirit. It may be too that he learned something from the school of Murano, of vigorous handling of colour as an integral part of his complicated and often tortured design ; a

remarkable example of all these characteristics is the " Madonna and Child Enthroned " (London, N.G. 772), in which also we may observe the peculiar ashen tone with which he so often invested even his most brilliant colour-schemes. His unrelenting asceticism, together with a fantastic imagination in the representation of landscape, is exemplified in his " St. Jerome," also in the London National Gallery (773).

His pupil and associate Francesco del Cossa (1435–1477) inherited but softened the severity of his drawing, mellowed his colour, and perhaps under the influence of Pisanello, gave greater verisimilitude to his landscape ; while Lorenzo Costa, a pupil of both of them, losing in power what he gained in sweetness, might have degenerated into a painter of sentimental and beautifully draped lay figures, with glimpses of lively but impossible landscape seen through the arched pedestal which is so common a feature of Ferrarese painting, had it not been for his removal to Bologna, where he entered into partnership with Francesco Raibolini (?1450–1517), called Francia, who abandoned the craft of a goldsmith, in 1484 or thereabouts, to become a painter.

It may be that the seed of good draughtsmanship brought to Bologna by Marco Zoppo (1433–1498) from the school of Squarcione served to strengthen Francia, and to give him the restraint that his partner Costa, and all his eclectic successors in Bologna, lacked ; for it is in Francia's work by himself that we find in their noblest form all the characteristics of the school of Bologna that were afterwards so fluently and flagrantly misused by the three Caracci, Lodovico, Agostino and Annibale, by the arch-sentimentalist Guido Reni, by Domenichino, and by Guercino. In Francia's great altarpiece in the London National Gallery, " The Madonna and Child and St. Anne with SS. Sebastian and Paul, Laurence and Romuald, and St. John Baptist " (179) and the Pietà (180) which completes it, fine drawing, rhythmically balanced composition, delicate harmony of colour and exquisitely sympathetic sentiment are combined to make one of the world's masterpieces ; and if we compare the gently brooding expression of Our Lady's face as she sits with the Holy Child upon her knee, enthroned beside St. Anne, with the agonised features of the mother of God in the Pietà, as she bends over her dead Son, we realise how genuine was the feeling which inspired the painter in his work.

Though it is customary to speak of the school of Parma, this is almost too definite a classification for the heterogeneous group of eclectics who practised in Parma ; for Filippo Mazzola (1460–1506) drew his instruction from the school of Bellini, and his more famous son, Francesco, called Parmigianino (1504–1540), built up his graceful, glowing art upon the study in turn of Correggio in Parma, of Raphael in Rome, and perhaps also of Raibolini in Bologna. He is a painter not to be despised nor lightly passed by, for he was no imitator, but a man of burning enthusiasm and delicate vision, something of a mystic at his best. His " Vision of St. Jerome " (London, N.G. 33) is a soaring design of rare beauty, rich and subdued in colour and sweet yet virile in sentiment.

Even Correggio himself (Antonio Allegri, 1494–1534), Parma's greatest glory, owed little or nothing to any school or tradition of Parma. From what great painter he did not borrow it would be hard to say. If we are to credit him with all the works which have recently been fathered upon the earlier years of his short life, he began by being a villainous draughtsman and a muddy colourist, cursed with a singularly morbid frame of mind. It is perhaps more satisfactory to confine ourselves to observing that in his maturity he was a draughtsman who counterstruck the gold of Michelangelo with his own image and superscription, a colourist who fused Michelangelo and Raphael into one and added to them an alloy of Titian, and a painter of joy so exuberant as to turn even sorrow into sweetness. His " Assumption " in the cathedral at Parma is a glorious riot of drawing, a prodigal outpouring of design, so rich in individual beauties that he could detach from it a single angel and turn it into a " Ganymede " able to hold his own all by himself in rhythm and movement. His " Education of Cupid " (London, N.G. 10) is a luscious fantasy, brimming with fun ; and yet, in the " Madonna of the Basket " (London, N.G. 23), there is an unearthly radiance, an exquisite tenderness which convey an unmistakable atmosphere of genuine if lighthearted religious feeling. Eclectic to the point of insolence, yet never pedantic or ostentatious of skill, Correggio justifies himself by glorious success.

Scarcely less eclectic, though far narrower in its range, is the group of painters to which has been given the appellation of the School of

Rome and Naples. Deriving mainly, through Giulio Romano, from Raphael, and recruited largely from Umbria, the Roman school produced little that is worthy of note, save as a survival of technical facility beyond the days of inspiration. Michelangelo Caravaggio (1569–1609), the turbulent rival of the Spaniard Ribera in Naples, was the only Roman artist who really originated any development of painting beyond the point at which he found it. To him must be conceded a bold interpretation, in terms of the most uncompromising realism, of the plastic strength in painting of his great namesake. His capacity for keen and literal observation was unlimited, and his power of turning extremes of light and shadow to dramatic account is startling. His influence on painting in Naples was very great ; and the savage and livid colouring, and violently dramatic composition of the landscapes of Salvatore Rosa (1615–1673), a Neapolitan born, though natural to an artist born in a climate where form, rather than colour, is of paramount significance, are evidence that the realism of Caravaggio and his immediate followers was a contributory factor in the formation of Rosa's peculiar style.

* * * * * *

Here we may close behind us the gates of Italy's garden of painters. Autumn is almost over ; even the late rank growths are losing their vigour, and are draggled by the frosts of frigid formalism and the winds of capricious and unmeaning fashion. A last late sickly flower in the Florentine corner, Carlo Dolci, is running riot in a swamp of sentiment. There is a tangle of hybrid weeds where once Siena bloomed. Umbria is already barren, her few poor survivors, Sassoferrato and his like, transplanted to the Roman hothouse to put forth a dwindling and shrivelled bloom as artificial as its surroundings. Only Venice shows signs of life, with a market garden grown for export, curious more than beautiful. Presently her vitality will reassert itself for a little while, but she too will sink to nothing in the weedy growth of Zuccarelli's slick and slipshod landscapes, and Zais, with his pastoral affectations raised from Zuccarelli's seed. It is a melancholy end. Still, it was a glorious garden once upon a time.

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The Annunciation

(*London, The National Gallery*)

GOZZOLI

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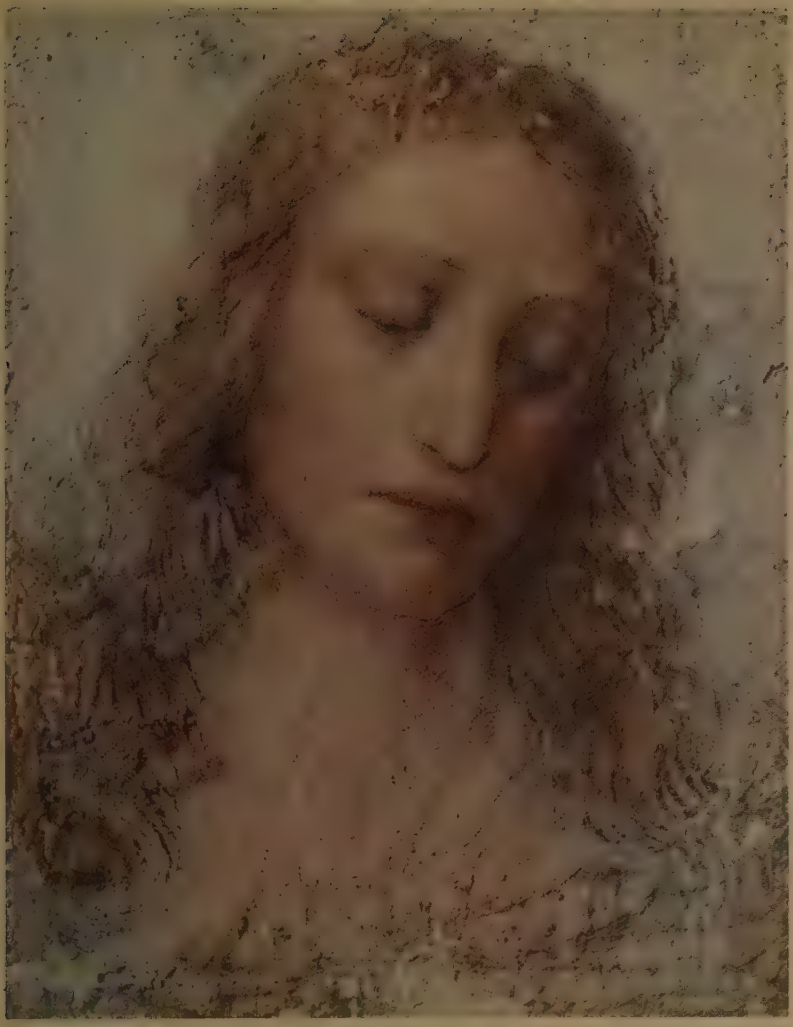
POLLAIUOLO

Head of a Woman

(*Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum*)



LEONARDO DA VINCI

Head of the Christ

(*Milan, Brera Gallery*)

MICHELANGELO

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St. Anthony and St. George
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BELLINI

Madonna of the Trees

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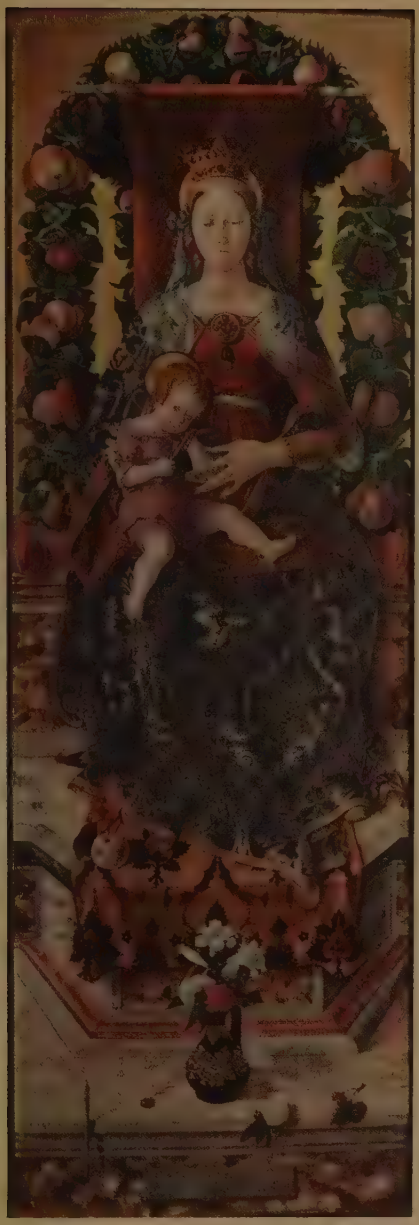
CARPACCIO

Vision of St. Ursula

(*Florence, Accademia*)



CRIVELLI

Madonna della Candeletta
(*Milan, Brera Gallery*)

GIORGIONE

Adrastus and Hypsipyle
(*Venice, Prince Giovanelli*)

TITIAN

La Bella

(*Florence, Pitti Palace*)

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Bacchus and Ariadne
(*Venice, Doges' Palace*)

CANALETTO

View Looking Towards Murano

(Windsor Castle, Collection H.M. The King)

GUARDI

Sta. Maria della Salute
(*London, Wallace Collection*)

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